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SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN: A STUDY IN THE AGENCY AREA OF KHAMMAM DISTRICT OF TELANGANA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Schedule tribes and denotified tribes constitute the weaker sections of India's population and the major constituents of the matrix of India's poverty. These sections are being exploited and they are deprived of civic facilities. They are bypassed by the planning process for the past several decades. This micro level study examines the socio-economic and demographic conditions of tribal women in Telangana state. The study strongly opines that more positive interventions by the administrators only will change the economic and living conditions of tribals.

KEYWORDS

tribal women, Khamman district, schedule tribes, poverty.

INTRODUCTION

The Tribal population of 10.43 crore accounting for 8.6 percent of the total population of India as per 2011 census is larger than any other ethnic community in the world. Tribal women constitute near half of the total tribal population. Tribals are economically backward and they inhabit forests, hills and mountain slopes. Their culture is ancient, rich, divergent and colorful, very much akin to that of the Indian culture in general. They are referred to as vanavasis, girijans, adivasis, adimajathis and the like. The term "Tribe" has not been defined precisely and clearly in the Indian context. However, the Lokur committee suggested the criteria to identify the tribals which include; primitive traits, distinctive culture, shyness of contact, geographical isolation and socio-economic backwardness. Women in the tribal societies are assets to the households as they take care of the household, earn money to support the family and manage the households. They assist in farm activities of the family, work as wage labour and involve in the collection of NTFP. Along with constitutional guarantees and legislative measures the governments at the centre and the states have introduced different programmes to improve them on par with the general population. But they are still lagging behind on all indicators of human development though the transition to modernity at a slow pace has begun.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this paper is to examine the socio-demographic, economic and living conditions of the tribal women in the agency mandals of Khammam district of the Telangana state. Specific objectives include the following;

1. To analyze the socio-demographic features of the tribal women.
2. To examine economic and living conditions of the respondents.
3. To ascertain the employment patterns of the tribal women.

DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

The state of Telangana came into existence as the 29th state of India on 2nd June 2014. It has the largest concentration of ST Population (9.3 percent) among the states in South India. Khammam district in the Telangana state has 27.4 percent of its population as STs and it is at the top in ST population in the state. The study has taken three contiguous mandals where "Koya" tribe is dominant and 340 women respondents are selected randomly. A sample of 116 respondents are chosen from Dummugudem, 120 from Dammamapeta and 104 from Yellandu mandals. The study is based on primary data collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. Secondary data in the form of reports and publications has also been used. Simple tools of analysis like averages and percentages are applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ten important indicators related to the Socio-Demographic features of the tribal women have been selected for analysis and the data is presented in table-1. It shows that a majority of the respondents (84.4 percent) in the study are in between 26-55 years of age with in marginal variations. Younger age group of below 25 years is less than 2 percent while 14.1 percent are in the above 55 years of age group. It implies that majority of the respondents are capable of taking up income earning activities. It is noted that 98.5 percent of the respondents are married substantiating the cultural ethos in India that marriage is universal. Illiteracy is wide spread in the study area as more than three fourths of the respondents are illiterates. Even among the literate's levels of education are very low since majority have completed primary/upper primary level of education. Joint families have lost their shine, even among the tribals, as 88.2 percent of the respondents are in nuclear families. As a natural corollary to this trend average size of the family in the study area is just 4.02.

School dropouts among the school going children are relatively low and the major reasons include lack of interest in education, poverty and domestic work. It is found that school dropout children are relatively more in the interior mandals than the mandal which is close to the urban centers. Most of the households of the sample (96 percent) opt government schools run by the ITDA, for the education of their children across the board. Though awareness level through watching TVs by 68 percent of the sample households is relatively better, other areas like news paper reading (11 percent) and visiting movies (15 percent) are very low.

Land ownership in the study mandals shows glaring inequalities. More than half of the respondents in one sample mandal - Yellandu, are medium and large farmers against 20 to 27 percent in the other two mandals. Land less households are more (23.3 percent) in Dammamapeta mandal against 5 to 10 percent in the other two mandals. In the study area as a whole marginal and small farmers account for 54.7 percent along with 12.9 percent of the respondents are landless. Disparities in the land ownership need state intervention in protecting the rights of tribals on forest land where 1/70 Act is applicable.

TABLE 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF THE SAMPLE TRIBAL HOUSEHOLDS

Sl.No	Feature	DM	DP	YLD	Total
1	Age				
	Below 25yrs	0(0)	2(1.7)	3(2.9)	5(1.5)
	26 to 55yrs	102(87.9)	101(84.2)	84(80.8)	287(84.4)
	Above 55 yrs	14(12.1)	17(14.2)	17(16.3)	48(14.1)
	Total	116(100)	120(100)	104(100)	340(100)
2	Marital status				
	Married	115(99.1)	117(97.5)	103(99)	335(98.5)
	Unmarried	1(0.9)	3(2.5)	1(1)	5(1.5)
	Total	116(100)	120(100)	104(100)	340(100)
3	Literacy				
	Illiterates	90(77.6)	93(77.5)	75(72.1)	258(75.9)
	Primary & Upper Primary edn. Above upper primary level	21(18.1) 5(4.3)	21(17.5) 6(5)	16(15.4) 13(12.5)	58(17.1) 24(7.1)
	Total	116(100)	120(100)	104(100)	340(100)
4	Type of family				
	Nuclear	104(89.7)	105(87.5)	91(87.5)	300(88.2)
	Joint	11(9.5)	10(8.3)	12(11.5)	33(9.7)
	Extended	1(0.9)	5(4.2)	1(1)	7(2.1)
	Total	116(100)	120(100)	104(100)	340(100)
5	Family members	496	755	416	1667
	Average size of the family	4.3	3.8	4	4.02
6	School dropout children	11	6	2	19
7	Reasons for school dropouts				
	Poverty	1	2	0	3
	No interest in edn.	8	1	0	9
	Domestic work	2	0	1	3
	No need of edn. To girls	0	2	1	3
8	Schools where children are studying				
	Government	98(98)	90(95)	79(94)	267(96)
	Private	2(2)	5(5)	5(6)	12(4)
	Total	100(100)	95(100)	84(100)	279(100)
9	Awareness levels through				
	News paper reading	13(13)	9(7)	15(15)	37(12)
	Watching TV	71(71)	88(73)	72(73)	231(72)
	Visiting movies	16(16)	24(20)	12(12)	52(16)
	Total	100(100)	121(100)	99(100)	320(100)
10	Land ownership				
	Landless	6(5.2)	28(23.3)	10(9.6)	44(12.9)
	Marginal farmers	38(32.8)	49(40.8)	11(10.6)	98(28.8)
	Small farmers	41(35.3)	19(15.8)	28(26.9)	88(25.9)
	Medium & Large farmers	31(26.7)	24(20)	55(52.9)	110(32.4)
	Total	116(100)	120(100)	104(100)	340(100)

Source: Field Study (figures in the brackets are percentages)

Note (Mandals): DM = Dummgudem, DP=Dammapeta, YLD= Yellandu

Table-2 presents the economic and living conditions of the respondent women. Average operated agricultural holding is 7.5 acres in the study mandals with the respondents in one mandal, Yellandu having more than the average size against the lowest size by those of Dammapeta. It is interesting to note that the land value in Yellandu mandal where the average land holding is the largest has higher land value than the overall average value of 2.2 lakhs. Another interesting point of note worthy is that one thirds of the respondent households have no live stock even through the conditions in the tribal areas are favorable for rearing live stock. However, majority of the respondent households (54 percent) have live stock with values of above Rs 6000. It can be inferred that two thirds of the respondent households are involved in live stock rearing. Majority of the respondents (91.5 percent) go into the forests and collect minor forest produce both for domestic use and commercial consideration. The respondents of interior mandals are more in MFP collection than the respondents of Yellandu.

With regard to housing 59.1 percent of the respondents have pucca houses of which the respondents of Yellandu are relatively more. It implies that 41 percent of the households live in semi pucca/katcha houses. Majority of the respondents have two or more rooms in the houses and 92 percent of the households have electricity connectivities. However, all other amenities like toilets, separate kitchens, tap water, LPG gas are available to a limited number of respondent households.

Employment in own-farm agriculture is the main occupation to 82.6 percent of the respondents while both agricultural and non-agricultural labour to the remaining. Near 80 percent of the respondents depend on agriculture as labour under secondary occupation. Occupational structure is found to be sticky as just 2.6 percent have stated occupational shifts. MGNREGA employment has provided 87 days of work to the respondent households on an average while agricultural labour has provided 278 days, own-farm activities 76 days, MFP collection 29 days and non-agricultural wage employment has been available for 116 days. It can be stated that agricultural labour and own-farm employment together constitute major source of employment supported by MGNREGA wage employment during the slack seasons.

TABLE 2: ECONOMIC AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE TRIBAL HOUSEHOLDS

Sl. No	Feature	DM	DP	YLD	Total
1	Average operated land holding (acres):	7.56	6.22	8.33	7.5
2	Average value of land per acres (in lakhs of Rs)	2.3	1.5	2.7	2.2
3	Live stock values				
	No live stock	17(14.7)	77(64.2)	28(26.9)	122(35.9)
	Below Rs.6000	12(10.3)	9(7.5)	13(12.5)	34(10)
	Above Rs.6000	87(75)	34(28.3)	63(60.6)	184(54.1)
	Total	116(100)	120(100)	104(100)	340(100)
4	MFP Collection	115(99.1)	109(90.8)	87(83.6)	311(91.5)
5	Housing				
	Pucca	37(31.9)	74(61.7)	90(86.5)	201(59.1)
	Semi pucca	7(6)	13(10.8)	3(2.9)	23(6.8)
	Kutch	72(62.1)	33(27.5)	11(10.6)	116(34.1)
6	Household amenities				
	Single room	26(22.4)	37(30.8)	13(12.5)	76(22.4)
	Two or more rooms	90(77.6)	83(69.2)	91(87.5)	264(77.6)
	Separate kitchen	6(5.2)	8(6.7)	10(9.6)	24(7.1)
	Drinking water - taps	8(6.9)	97(80.8)	44(42.3)	149(43.8)
	Bore wells	99(85.3)	12(10)	49(47.1)	160(47.1)
	Electricity : available	104(89.6)	110(91.7)	100(96.1)	314(92.3)
	Fuel for cooking : LPG	9(7.7)	9(7.5)	34(32.7)	52(15.3)
	Fire wood	107(92.2)	111(92.5)	69(66.3)	287(84.4)
	No toilet facility	116(100)	105(87.5)	69(66.3)	290(85.3)
7	Main occupation				
	Own farm agriculture	105(90.5)	85(70.8)	91(87.5)	281(82.6)
	Agriculture labour	4(3.4)	27(22.5)	5(4.8)	36(10.6)
	Non-agriculture labour	7(6)	8(6.7)	8(7.7)	23(6.8)
8	Major secondary occupation				
	Agriculture labour	91(78.4)	100(82.3)	80(76.9)	271(79.7)
9	Occupational shifts	4(3.4)	1(0.8)	4(3.8)	9(2.6)
10	Average employment days of the sample households				
	Own farm	76.01	74.19	77.81	76.01
	agriculture labour	235.48	362.67	221.91	277.87
	MGNREGS	83.2	96.13	81.69	87.22
	NFTF Collection	21.17	128.18	19.66	29.33
	Non-agriculture wage employment	116.15	171.5	66.25	115.93

Source: Field Study (Figures in the brackets are percentages)

Note (Mandals): DM = Dummugudem, DP=Dammapeta, YLD= Yellandu

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Illiteracy is rampant in the tribal villages of the sample.
2. School dropouts among school-aged children are relatively more in the interior villages of the agency areas and the major reason is lack of interest in education.
3. Most of the tribal children are in government schools run by ITDA.
4. Land distribution is inequitable and land less households are considerable
5. Average land holdings in the study area are relatively higher than the national average
6. Tribal villages close to the plain areas are more advanced in many aspects when compared to the interior villages
7. Agriculture is the major source of employment in the tribal areas as non-agricultural employment is limited. MGNREGA has become significant in providing wage employment during the slack season of agriculture. Hence the days of employment under MGNREGA be enhanced by removing the ceiling, specially in the remote tribal areas.

CONCLUSION

Variations are noted in different degrees among the Koya tribal community implying exclusion among the excluded, marginalized social group. The study, thus, focuses on the need to design region specific and tribe specific policies and programs to ameliorate the conditions of the tribals. A dualistic situation is discernible in the sample villages as the modern trends and traditional features co-exist. Nuclear families, pucca houses with electricity connectivities and the schooling of maximum number of children are the indicators of transition to modernity while illiteracy of the respondents, low levels of awareness, dependence on agriculture, involvement in MFP collection, use of fire wood for cooking and low household amenities testify the traditional living. It can be surmised that tribal households have to go miles to reach the road to development. The study strongly opines that more positive interventions by the administrators only will change the economic and living conditions of tribals.

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