

Empowerment of Tribal Women through Livelihood Development

R. Nisha¹ and M.Asokhan²

*Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology Tamil Nadu Agricultural University
Coimbatore-641003*

Abstract: *Tribal women play a significant role in the economic development of tribals as they contribute in various economic activities and education is one of the them. Money lending and Indebtedness , despite legal and protective measures to curb money lending in scheduled areas and provisions for debt relief, enforcement has been weak and ineffective. The non- recognition of the consumption needs of tribals and the non-availability of institutional consumption credit makes tribal people fall easy victim to money lenders and leads to dependence on them. The study entitled “Empowerment of tribal women through livelihood development” aimed to study the profile characteristics of tribal women, to analyse the relationship of socio-personal and socio-psychological characteristics with the level of participation of tribal women, to find out the empowerment level of tribal women to explore the constraints faced by the tribal women in participating in the cultural practices and to get suggestions to overcome the constraints.*

Keywords: *Participation, Empowerment, Tribal women, Livelihood, Development*

I. Introduction

“Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities, she has the right to participate in every minute details in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him”

-Mahatma Gandhi

The tribal population is an integral part of India’s social fabric and has the second largest concentration after that of the African Continent. It is more than the total population of France and Britain and four times that of Australia. The population of tribal communities scheduled in the Constitution of India and known as Scheduled Tribes (STs) was 8.43 crore as per 2011 census and accounts for 8.20 per cent of the total population of which 4.26 crores are men and 4.17 crores are women, accounting for 8.01 per cent and 8.40 per cent respectively. They are scattered over all the states/UTs, except Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and the UTs (Union Territories) of Pondicherry and Chandigarh. (Varadarajan, 2002).

India accounts for 84 millions of Scheduled Tribes which contributes to about eight per cent of India’s population and they account for a quarter of the country’s poorest people. Although these groups have seen considerable progress over the years and poverty among tribal groups declined by more than a third between 1983 and 2005 - nearly half the country’s Scheduled Tribe population still remains in poverty, due to their low starting point. Rajasthan has the largest population of Scheduled Tribes in the country, constituting over 12.00 per cent of the state’s population. They are concentrated in the southern tribal and western desert regions of the state. (Singh, 2006). Tribal forest economy is primarily a women’s economy, and it is women who are most directly affected by the corporate exploitation Tribals live in far-flung areas often outside the reach of modern means of information and communication technology. They are thus deprived of crucial information regarding development initiatives, employment programmes etc. Use of IT could help women to improve agricultural productivity and become entrepreneurs and information intermediaries. It could provide tribal women with farm-related information such as best package of practices, weather forecasting, access to credit, price and availability of far inputs, market information etc. of their traditional lands.

II. Methodology

Research methodology is the way to systematically solve the research problems. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done systematically. It explains various steps that are adopted by a researcher in conducting the research problem along with the logic behind them. This study focused on “Empowerment of tribal women through livelihood development”. In accordance with the objectives of the study. The Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu was purposively selected because it is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu where the percentage of tribal population is higher. Also, the familiarity of the researcher to the culture and local dialect of the district was considered.

Selection of block

The Nilgiris District comprises of four blocks. viz., Udhagamandalam, Coonoor, Kotagiri and Gudalur. Of these, Udhagamandalam and Kotagiri blocks were selected based on the population of tribals.



Map depicting the study area

Selection of revenue villages

From each block four revenue villages were selected based on the tribal population thus a total of eight revenue villages from two blocks were selected.

Selection of respondents

Sample and sampling procedure

In Nilgiris district, CTRD and NAWA strive for the upliftment of the tribal communities viz., Paniyars, Kattunayakars, Todas, Irulas, Kotas and Kurumbas. A sample size of 60 members from each block was considered for the study. Totally, 120 respondents of tribal women were taken for the study. The number of respondents from each of the selected block was fixed based on the Proportionate Random Sampling (PRS) method.

Research design

The design of research is the most important and critical aspect of research methodology. In a broad sense, research design is the process of planning and carrying out research. Ex-post facto research design was used in this study to suit the objectives and type of information needed.

III. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study along with relevant discussion are presented in this chapter under the following sub-heads

1.Age

It is presumed that age is an essential variable for their participation and involvement in developmental activities. The completed years of age was collected from the respondents and it was classified as young (upto 35 years), middle (35 to 45years) and old (more than 45 years). The distribution of respondents according to age is given in Table1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to age (n=120)

Sl. No.	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Young (upto 35 years)	36	30.00
2.	Middle (36 to 45 years)	54	45.00
3.	Old (more than 45 years)	30	25.00
	Total	120	100.00

The above Table 1 infers that among the total respondents nearly half (45.00%) of the respondents was found to be in middle aged group followed by young (30.00%) and old (25.00%) aged groups.

The probable reason for this result might be the middle aged women would have showed more interest and enthusiasm towards group activities rather than the aged women. They were also friendly with each other and share the important issues among them. This was useful for the respondents to actively participate in developmental programmes.

Thus, the results are in line with the findings of Marimuthu (2001) and Bhuvanewari (2005).

2. Educational status

Education improves one’s capability to cope up with different situations and also helps in taking good decisions like analyzing the developmental schemes and requirements for deciding whether to participate in it or not. The distribution of respondents based on their educational status is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to educational status (n=120)

Sl. No.	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	68	56.67
2.	Functionally literate	34	28.33
3.	Primary education	5	4.17
4.	Middle education	13	10.83
	Total	120	100.00

Table 2 reveals that 56.67 per cent of the tribal women were observed to be illiterates followed by functionally literates (28.33%), middle education (10.83%) and primary education (4.17%).

This is mainly because the tribal women are more prone to their traditions and they do not come forward to upgrade their educational standards.

This finding is in line with the findings of Cinthia (2009)

3. Annual income

It refers to the total family earning in a year. It is assumed that the families of the individuals which could meet the basic necessities only, could extend their attention to the development activities in their locale. The distribution of respondents based on annual income is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to annual income

Sl. No.	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than Rs.19,500	44	36.67
2.	Rs.19,501 to 24,500	56	46.67
3.	More than Rs.24,500	20	16.66
	Total	120	100.00

From the Table 3, it could be concluded that nearly half (46.67 %) of the respondents were belonged to income category of Rs.19,501 to 24,500 and 36.67 per cent of the respondents were observed to have earned annual income less than Rs. 19,500 and less 16.66 per cent of the respondents belonged to income category of more than Rs. 24,500.

The tribal women were found to earn relatively more income than the other communities because their earnings have been mostly from the income generating activities.

The reason behind this is that the tribal women are not much aware about the income generating activities and they do engage in pastoral activities mostly

This finding is in line with the results of Sujhi (2004).

4. Economic motivation

Economic motivation of the respondents was studied with the help of statements revealing the motivation of the respondents towards the economic and income generating activities. Total scores of the statements were calculated and the respondents were classified as low, medium and high. The results are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to economic motivation

Sl. No.	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Low	29	24.17
2.	Medium	82	68.33
3.	High	9	7.50
	Total	120	100.00

The above Table 4 referred that among the total respondents 68.33 per cent were having medium level of economic motivation followed by low level (24.17%) and high level (7.50%).

Hard work and employment always result in monetary benefit of the respondents. Any activity or technology would be easily accepted and adopted by the respondents when it is provided some economic benefit to the individual. Medium level of economic motivation influenced the participation pattern of the individual in developmental programmes.

This finding is in conformity with the findings of Seema (2002).

5. Innovativeness

Innovativeness was measured in terms of the statements that at what period an individual agrees to adopt a technology. The time lapse was measured in three statements. The respondents were classified as low, medium and high according to the responses given. The results are depicted in Table 5

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents according to innovativeness.

Sl. No.	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Low	27	22.50
2.	Medium	13	10.83
3.	High	80	66.67
	Total	120	100.00

From the above Table 5 it could be concluded that two-third (66.67%) of the respondents were having higher level of innovativeness followed by low (22.50%) and medium (10.83%) levels of innovativeness.

The respondents were aware about the new technologies and also have got the motivation to adopt them. Higher level of innovativeness always influence their participation in all types of activities. This shows the motivation and influence of the modern media on the tribal women.

The findings of Marimuthu (2001) coincided with the results of the present study.

6. Perceived empowerment

The perceived empowerment due to the participation in developmental programmes and subsequent activities, the tribal women are reported to have been empowered in many dimensions.

Perceived empowerment in Psychological and Sociological dimensions

The data collected on various items of psychological and sociological dimensions of perceived empowerment among the tribal women have been given in Table 6.

Table 6. Perceived empowerment in Psychological and Sociological dimensions (n=120)*

S.No	Category	No	Percentage
A. Psychological dimension			
1.	Improvement in self-confidence	79	65.83
2.	Improvement in communication skill	62	51.67
3.	Increase in leadership skill	53	44.17
4.	Ability to express own views	49	40.83
B. Sociological dimension			
1.	Social recognition	41	34.17
2.	Improvement in social status	59	49.17
3.	Joint decision making at all levels	94	78.33
4.	Awareness about socio-economic development programmes	67	55.83
5.	Active involvement in addressing social issues and problems	38	31.67
6.	Joint decision making at all levels	94	78.33
7.	Better planning in family maintenance	43	35.83
8.	Social problems in the village are resolved	44	36.67
9.	Better linkage with local institutions	32	26.67

***Multiple responses**

The overall picture exhibit that joint decision making as stated by 78.33 per cent of the respondents at all levels has emerged as the major perceived empowerment aspects in respect of psychological and sociological dimensions respectively. This was followed by improvement in self-confidence (65.83%) in psychological and sociological dimensions.

Thus it could be interpreted that the participation in developmental programmes resulted in strengthening the psychological and sociological dimensions of empowerment.

The findings of Sarangi (2003) coincided with the results of the present study

IV. Conclusion

Tribal society is normally conceptualized as clan-lineage based segmentary system characterized by mechanical solidarity. Broadly tribe is an aggregate of people sharing social values, common dialect, territory and culture. But in a restricted sense, tribe means “a group of people under a chief and maintaining distinct cultural traits”. Over eight percent of India’s total population, the tribals have a variety in their culture, lifestyle and above all different customs and worldview of their own. Today despite their adaptation and exposure to the culture of larger society, modernization, industrialization, the tribes live in a world of dynamic isolation that helps the tribal to maintain its distinct socio-cultural identity.

1. Among the total respondents more than two-fifth (45.00%) of the respondents were found to be in middle aged group followed by young (30.00%) and old (25.00%) aged groups.
2. Among the respondents 56.67 per cent of the tribal women were observed to be illiterates followed by functionally literates (28.33%), educated upto middle school (10.83 %) and primary school levels (4.17%). None of the respondents had education beyond middle school level.
3. Nearly half (46.67%) of the respondents were belonged to income category of Rs.19,501 and (36.67%) of the respondents were observed to have earned annual income less than Rs. 19,500 and less proportion (16.66%) of the respondents belonged to income category more than Rs. 24,500.
4. Among the respondents 68.33 per cent were having medium level of economic motivation followed by with low level (24.17%) and high level (7.50%).
5. Nearly two-third (66.67%) of the respondents were having higher level of innovativeness followed by low (22.50%) and medium (10.83%) level of innovativeness.
6. The overall picture exhibit that Joint decision making at all levels as stated by the respondents 78.33 per cent has emerged as the major perceived empowerment aspects in respect of psychological and sociological dimensions respectively. This was followed by improvement in self-confidence (65.83%) in psychological and sociological dimensions

Constraints faced

Among the problems faced, majority (83.33%) of tribal women have faced more prevalence of social taboos, superstitions and traditions followed by indebtedness (67.50%), lack of awareness about credit sources (68.33%), insufficient credit facilities (66.67%), lack of awareness about the tribal development schemes (60.83%), fear of social security (60.00%), lack of adequate communication skills (60.00%) less importance to actual need (58.33%), gender bias (54.17%), inadequate motivation from family members (50.00%), lack of self motivation (48.33%), suppression due to the dependable nature of women (42.50%), lack of adequate training facilities (33.33%), and lack of periodical training (28.33%) were the major constraints reported by the tribal women.

References

- [1]. Bhuvaneshwari, Sri Vara Buddhi. 2005. Role of Tribal Women in the Conservation of Agro biodiversity: A Multidimensional Analysis. Unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, TNAU, Coimbatore.
- [2]. Cinthiafernandaz, C. 2009. Participation of tribal women in agro biodiversity conservation and postulating environmental education module for sustainable livelihood. Unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, AC&RI, TNAU, Coimbatore.
- [3]. Marimuthu, P. 2001. Indigenous Tribal Wisdom for Rural Development : A Multi-dimensional Analysis. Unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, TNAU, Coimbatore
- [4]. Sarangi, P. 2003. Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women and Builds Confidence Through Establishment of SHGs. Kurukshetra, 51(4), New Delhi.
- [5]. Seema, 2002. Developing a Strategy for Tribal Development. Unpub. Ph.D. Thesis, AC&RI, TNAU, Coimbatore
- [6]. Singh, S. K.. 2006. Sustainable Development and Tribal women, in Land and Forest Rights of the Tribals Today. R.M., Serials Publications, New Delhi: 168-181
- [7]. Sujhi, G. 2004. A Comparative Study on the Beneficiaries Attitude Towards Micro Financing Institution and Banking Institution. Unpub. M.Sc.(Ag.) Thesis, AC&RI, TNAU, Coimbatore
- [8]. Vardarajan, D. B. 2002. Women and Environment Eco-Feminist’s Perspectives, in Empowerment of Women and Ecological Development. A.R., Serials Publications, New Delhi.