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Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala: a Comparitive Study

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ABSTRACT
Communities that exhibit primitive qualities, geographic isolation, a unique culture, and social backwardness are known as Scheduled Tribes (STs). Kerala attained a high degree of human development despite having few resources. However, there is a difference between the indigenous communities and the general population. In many areas, including education, health, housing, occupation, income, and so on, they are at a disadvantage. The population of Scheduled Tribes grew from 30.1 million in 1961 to 104.3 million in 2011. However, Scheduled Tribes' population growth was extremely slow when compared to India's overall population. Two communities from Pathanamthitta district were selected for the study. The present study aims to study the socio-economic condition of the MalaPandaran and Ulladan communities in Pathanamthitta. It also examines the level of empowerment of these two communities. The study found that the MalaPandaran were less empowered than the Ulladan community.

Keywords: Demographic variables, Empowerment, Scheduled Tribes..

INTRODUCTION
Communities that exhibit primitive qualities, geographic isolation, a unique culture, and social backwardness are known as Scheduled Tribes (STs). As demonstrated by the globally comparable levels of literacy, life expectancy, infant mortality, maternal mortality rate, etc., Kerala attained a high degree of human development despite having few resources. However, there is a difference between the indigenous communities and the general population. In many areas, including education, health, housing, occupation, income, and so on, they are at a disadvantage.

According to the 2011 census, there are 10.43 crore tribal people in the nation, making up 8.6 per cent of the overall population. Of them, 10.03 percent reside in cities and 89.97 per cent in rural areas. Tribals' decadal population growth from the 2001 Census to 2011 was 23.66 per cent, compared to 17.69 per cent of the total population. The population of Scheduled Tribes grew from 30.1 million in 1961 to 104.3 million in 2011. However, Scheduled Tribes' population growth was extremely slow when compared to India's overall population. The majority of people who belong to Scheduled Tribes live in rural parts of the nation. The 2011 Census shows that there are 940 women for every 1000 men in the general population and 990 women for every 1000 men among Scheduled Tribes. In India, Scheduled Tribes have a literacy rate of 58.96 per cent, whereas the national average is 72.99 per cent. While the overall population went from 28.30 per cent in 1961 to 72.99 per cent in 2011, the Scheduled Tribes' literacy rate increased from 8.53 per cent in 1961 to 58.96 per cent in 2011.

The tribal development measures adopted during the second half of the century are found to be insufficient in improving the economic and health conditions of the tribes. Even after the introduction of several welfare measures, the tribes are still facing several economic and social constraints. The tribes do not have sufficient and proper food to eat, clothes to cover their bodies, houses to live in, or money to seek medical help and live satisfactorily. There are problems due to the new land revenue system. Earlier the tribes had sole right to the forest and the natural resources in their traditional habitations. At this juncture, the present study was proposed to study the socioeconomic background and empowerment of tribes in the Pathanamthitta district. A large number of tribes are migrating to cities and towns all over the district. Most of the tribes are illiterate and unskilled. They work in inhuman conditions in cities, as their living standard is extremely poor

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the socioeconomic condition of tribals in the selected area.
2. To analyze the level of empowerment of tribals in the selected area

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant association between the demographic variables and level of empowerment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leela Gulati and Ramalingam (1997) viewed education as another sector that distinguishes Kerala from many other parts of the country, with the state exhibiting high levels of enrolment in schools and colleges. The enrollment of scheduled tribes in the lower and upper primary levels is relatively higher than their population share. This indicates a high degree of willingness on the part of the tribal population to enrol their children. However, a falling enrolment rate and a high dropout rate set in from the high school level. Nidheesh (2009), in his article, evaluated the tribal women's self-help groups in the Wayanad district of Kerala. The study was a formative evaluation of the self-help groups and the assessment in an action research pattern. The author reveals that the tribal women alleged change at the village and Panchayath levels. 70 per cent of the women were occupied in social accomplishment programs such as encouraging children and parents to fit into places in schooling, allowing daughters to complete their studies, taking action to close down liquor shops, and petitioning the collector to make necessary improvements in the village. Through the study, it reflects the political and social empowerment of tribal women through self-help groups.

METHODOLOGY

The sampling design adopted is stratified random sampling. Pathanamthitta district is selected for the study. The MalaPandaran and Ulladan communities were selected from this district. Out of the different panchayats in the district, 2 panchayats were selected based on the availability of the dominant tribal people. Sample size is 320.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary data is collected by interview schedule. The primary data are collected by in-depth interviews. Secondary data is collected from journals, published articles, magazines, internet sources, and newspapers. Besides, unpublished data are gathered from research organizations/institutions, government sources, etc. Data is analysed by SPSS.

DATA ANALYSIS

320 respondents from Pathanamthitta district were selected. 106 respondents from the MalaPandaran community and 214 respondents from the Ulladan community were selected for the analysis. Factors such as age, educational qualification, income, and occupation are discussed below:

TABLE 1.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

VARIABLES	MALAPANDARAN		ULLADAN	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age				
Below 25	30	28.3	40	18.8
26-45	40	37.7	70	32.7
46-55	24	22.6	66	30.8
Above 56	12	11.4	38	17.7
Gender				
Male	70	66.1	120	56.1
Female	36	33.9	94	43.9
Educational qualification				
Illiterate	59	55.6	20	9.5
Below primary	34	32.0	60	28.0
Below HSC	11	10.6	94	43.9
Degree and above	2	1.8	40	18.6

Occupation				
Forest collection	60	56.6	10	4.6
MGNREGA	20	18.8	70	32.7
Government job	1	0.9	20	9.5
Private job	12	11.3	48	22.4
Manual workers	13	12.4	66	30.8
Income				
Below 5000	83	78.3	6	2.8
5000-10000	20	18.8	168	78.5
Above 10000	3	2.9	40	18.7

Source: Primary source

The table above reveals that 37.7 percent of MalaPandaran and 32.7 percent of Ulladan respondents belong to the age group of below 25. In the case of educational qualification, 55.6 percent of Mala Pandaran were illiterate, but in the case of Ulladan, only 9.5 percent belonged to the illiterate and 43.9 percent had above HSC qualification. In the case of MalaPandaran, 56.6 percent still engage in forest collection for their livelihood, but 32.7 percent of Ulladan were in MGNREGA. 78.3 percent of Mala Pandaran only earn rupees below 5000, but 78.5 percent of Ulladan earn Rs.5000-Rs.10000. The above clearly shows that the MalaPandaran community faces a more pathetic situation than Ulladan.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND EMPOWERMENT

The study attempts to examine the association between demographic variables and level of empowerment in decision-making, self-confidence, knowledge, social status, health awareness, and quality of life. The chi-square test uses Cramer's V to evaluate the effect of the association between the various independent (demographic variables) and the dependent (level of empowerment).

H0: There is no significant association between the demographical variables and their level of empowerment.

TABLE 1.2 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE DEMOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES AND THE LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT

Testing variables		Chi- square test			
Independent	Dependent	$\chi 2$	Df	P value	Cramer's V
Community	Decision making	26.930	2	0.000	0.290
Age		265.100	6	0.000	0.644
Education		266.429	6	0.000	0.645
Income		221.815	4	0.000	0.589
Occupation		256.562	8	0.000	0.633
Community	Self-confidence	26.405	2	0.000	0.287
Age		282.351	6	0.000	0.664
Education		284.486	6	0.000	0.667
Income		233.479	4	0.000	0.604
Occupation		274.226	8	0.000	0.655
Community	Knowledge	28.108	2	0.000	0.296
Age		269.273	6	0.000	0.649
Education		266.429	6	0.000	0.645
Income		218.018	4	0.000	0.584
Occupation		273.453	8	0.000	0.654
Community	Social status	28.108	2	0.000	0.296
Age		269.273	6	0.000	0.649
Education		266.429	6	0.000	0.645
Income		218.018	4	0.000	0.584
Occupation		273.453	8	0.000	0.654
Community	Health	26.405	2	0.000	0.287
Age		282.351	6	0.000	0.664
Education		284.486	6	0.000	0.667
Income		233.479	4	0.000	0.604
Occupation		274.226	8	0.000	0.655

The above table found that the chi-square ($\chi 2$) value for decision-making, self-confidence, knowledge, and health in the community, age, income, and education is significant. Since the p-value is less than 0.01, the study rejects the null hypothesis. The study concluded that there is a significant association between the level of empowerment and demographic variables. And in the case of Cramer's V, there is a strong association between empowerment and demographic variables.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The constitution of India provides a number of facilities, protections, and privileges to the scheduled tribes. Because of these, the STs have been able to develop both economically and educationally. The study uses 320 samples: 106 from the MalaPandaran and 214 from the Ulladan community. The study found out that the Ulladan community was more empowered than the MalaPandaran community. The study suggests that integrated strategies must be developed and implemented for the empowerment of the tribes. The government should encourage more NGOs to assist the tribally educated to take more and more enterprising activities.

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