

Socio Economic Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women – A Study

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ABSTRACT

The state and place of the scheduled caste women was very dangerous in earliest and in primitive periods. The scheduled caste women are known to be particularly underprivileged. But when the western ruler held the power in India, the situation of the scheduled caste women was improved. The social and economic status of general women and scheduled caste women remains pathetic in the country due to non-implementation of constitutional provisions and development projects. Systematic government intervention for scheduled caste women empowerment helps the scheduled caste women to change their mindset, adopt healthy lifestyles, obtain the benefits of development projects and achieve development through active participation. Scheduled castes women's participation in the economic activity is important for their own personal advancement as also for an improvement of their status in the society. In this context, empowerment of rural scheduled caste women is very much necessary. The contribution of scheduled castes women and their role in the family as well as economic

development and social transformation are pivotal and need to be taken into consideration. Keeping in view the above universal facts there is a greater need for the empowerment of scheduled caste women and the state is taking all the steps to empower the socio-economic conditions of women. The specific objectives of the present study are

- 1. To study the socio-economic profile of the sample respondents.*
- 2. To assess the consumption empowerment function for the households of sample scheduled caste women in Thoothukudi district.*
- 3. To examine the effect of social transformation of scheduled caste women.*
- 4. To analyse the problems faced by scheduled caste women in the study area.*

The present study delivers sufficient evidence to the fact that the social and economic status of scheduled caste women improved in the study area. The possible outcomes of women empowerment through social transformation improved health and employment, enhanced social dignity and

better status for scheduled caste women. Thus, economic independence no doubt empowered the scheduled caste women and contributed significantly to the social transformation.

Keywords: empowerment; underprivileged; poverty reduction; economic independence; social transformation.

INTRODUCTION

During the last six decades, development planning for women straddled theories as disparate as welfare, development, equality, efficiency & empowerment¹. Though women constitute half of the world population, they are the largest group which is excluded from the benefits of social and economic development². Empowerment is the power of decision making i.e. autonomy³. Empowerment has many elements which depend upon and relate to each other in economic, social, political and personal⁴.

The empowerment of women occurs in reality when women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads to their better access to resources and therefore, improved socio-economic status⁵. In general, scheduled caste women have low level literacy which affects their attitude towards social mobilization. Education liberates them from the clutches of

ignorance and superstition. Besides attending to their routine household activities, scheduled castes women are involved in agricultural and allied activities like livestock rearing, food processing etc.

In addition, they undertake poultry, animal husbandry, bee-keeping, tailoring besides construction labour, working in factories etc. However, agriculture is the main source of employment for a great majority of scheduled caste women. In recent years, mechanization of agriculture, application of new technology reduced the demand for labour. Inevitably this affects the employment chances of rural scheduled caste women.

Empowerment of the scheduled caste women is a means to poverty alleviation. The goals of poverty eradication can be effectively achieved if scheduled caste women could be organized into groups for community participation as well as for assertion of their rights. Any strategy of sustainable development relating to poverty eradication has to involve the large number of poor women. Social mobilization and building organization of the poor are essential prerequisites for poverty alleviation. There are several strategies, which enable overall development of scheduled caste women. The following strategies were found more effective for overall development. They are:

- a) Empowerment of women through development of women and children in the rural areas/ Self-Help Groups.
- b) Empowerment of women through education and training.
- c) Empowerment through political participation.
- d) Empowerment evaluation as strategies of empowering women.

Keeping in view the above universal facts there is a greater need for the empowerment of scheduled caste women and the state is taking all the steps to empower the socio-economic conditions of women. The present paper deals with the empowerment of scheduled caste women in Thoothukudi District.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the present study are

5. To study the socio-economic profile of the sample respondents.
6. To assess the consumption empowerment function for the households of sample scheduled caste women in Thoothukudi district.
7. To examine the effect of social transformation of scheduled caste women.
8. To analyse the problems faced by scheduled caste women in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based upon primary and secondary data both. The primary data was collected through a questionnaire designed exclusively for the study. The primary data were obtained from 250 scheduled caste women workers of Thoothukudi District using simple random sampling method. Secondary data was taken from workers unions, office of the Labour and Employment and district officials, Micro Small & Medium Enterprise (MSME) Development Institute, Thoothukudi and District Industries Centre, Thoothukudi, research papers, journals, magazines and websites. For data analysis, percentage analysis, tabulation, averages, standard deviation, method of least squares, stepwise multiple regression analysis and Garrett ranking analysis tools are used. The data relates to the month of March 2018.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The female scheduled castes population in Thoothukudi district is greater in number than the males, but they are more backward in the matter of literacy and employment level than men. The total Scheduled Castes population of Thoothukudi district, as per the 2011 Census is 2,48,752 consists of male 1,23,457 and female 1,25,295 respectively. In Thoothukudi district, out of total female population 25.45%

are scheduled caste women. Hence, the present study is an attempt to analyse the

empowerment of scheduled caste women in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu.

Age-wise analysis of the respondents

SI. No	Age (in years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	20-30 years	28	11.20
2	31-40 years	53	21.20
3	41-50 years	117	46.80
4	51-60 years	52	20.80
	Total	250	100

Source: survey data

Note: Mean age of sample respondents 43.16 years.

From the table it has been revealed that among 250 sample respondents, the majority of the respondents are in the age group of 41-50 years. Only 28 (11.20 percent) of the respondents are in the age group of 20-30 years, 53(21.20 percent) of the respondents

fall under the age group of 31-40. 117(46.80 percent) of the respondents are from 41-50 age group and remaining 52(20.80 percent) of the respondents are from 51-60 age group. The mean age of respondents worked out to be 43.1 years.

Educational Status of the Respondents

Sl.No	Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Illiterate	26	10.4
2.	Primary	47	18.8
3.	High school	98	39.2
4.	College	43	17.2
5.	Technical	36	14.4
	Total	250	100

Source: survey data

Education plays an important role in the improvement of the society. The importance of education is keenly felt even in rural areas.

Out of the 250 respondents, 26 persons (10.4 percent) are illiterate, 47 respondents (18.8 percent) are completed their primary school

level. 98 persons (39.2 percent) have completed their high school education, 43 persons (17.2 percent) have finished a degree

and 36 people (14.4 percent) have finished technical level education.

Marital Status of the Respondents

Sl.No	Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Married	214	85.6
2	Unmarried	36	14.4
	Total	250	100

Source: survey data

It reveals that out of 250 respondents, 214 (85.6 percent) respondents are married 36 (14.4 percent) respondents are unmarried.

Division-Wise Distribution of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Divisions of Scheduled Caste	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Adidravida	84	33.6
2.	Chalavadi	19	7.6
3.	Devendrakulathan	32	12.8
4.	Kuravan	27	10.8
5.	Pallan	19	7.6
6.	Paraiyan	12	4.8
7.	Paravan	9	3.6
8.	Sambavar	12	4.8
9.	Samban	26	10.4
10.	Vannan	10	4.0
Total		250	100

Source: survey data

The table indicates that out of 250 respondents 84(33.6 percent) are Adidravidas 19 (7.6 percent) are Chalavadies. Moreover, 12.8%, 10.8%, 7.6% and 4.8 percent are Devendrakulathan, Kuravan, Pallan, and

Paraiyan respectively. Likewise, 3.6%, 4.8%, 10.4% and 4% of the respondents are Paravan, Sambavar, Samban and Vannan respectively.

Family Size

Sl. No.	Family Size	Respondents	Percentage
1.	Below 2	55	22.0

2.	2-3	98	39.2
3.	3-4	76	30.4
4.	4 and above	21	8.4
Total		250	100

Source: Survey data.

Note: Average family size 2.75

A maximum of 98 (39.2 percent) of respondents have a family size of 2- 3 members, followed by 76 (30.4 percent) having a family size of 3 - 4 members. 55 (22.0 percent) have a family size of below 2;

and only 21 (8.4 percent) having a family size of 4 and above. It is observed that majority of them have a family size of 2- 3 members. The average size of the family worked out to be 2.75.

Monthly personal income of the respondents

Sl. No.	Monthly Personal Income (in Rs.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Less than Rs.5,000	41	16.4
2.	Rs.5,001 – Rs.7,000	59	23.6
3.	Rs.7,001 – Rs.9,000	118	47.2
4.	Rs.9,001 and above	32	12.8
Total		250	100.00

Source: Survey data.

Note: Mean monthly personal income Rs.7128.5.

It shows that out of 250 respondents a majority of 118 (47.2 percent) earn a monthly income of Rs.7, 001 to Rs.9, 000 followed by 59 (23.6 percent) earning Rs.5001to Rs.7, 001. 41(16.4 percent) of the respondents earn less than Rs.5000, 32 (12.8 percent) earn Rs.9001 and above. The mean monthly personal income worked out to be Rs.7128.5

Consumption empowerment

Consumption empowerment is the main factor of aggregate demand in an economy. Food consumption empowerment pattern of household is a vital indicator of individual welfare and well-being in any country. Human life is finally promoted and continued by consumption. The requirements for shelter clothing, health and education can also be included in the category of primary consumption; the secondary consumption

empowerment includes the satisfaction of a more cultured structure of physiological desires which relate to social, cultural and intellectual interests⁶.

Consumption empowerment clearly contributes to human development when it enlarges the capabilities and enriches the lives of people without adversely affecting the well-being of others⁷. A determination is made in this division to consider marginal propensity to consume with the support of a

$$\text{Log } C = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log I_1 + \beta_2 \log S_2 + u \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where

C = Annual consumption expenditure of the households. (at Rs.)

I₁ = Annual household disposable income (in Rs.)

S₂ = Size of family (No. of persons)

u = Disturbance term

β₀, β₁ and β₂ are the parameters to be estimated.

The above equation (1) is estimated by the method of least squares with usual assumptions.

Further, the Marginal Propensity to Consume (MPC) and Marginal Propensity to Save (MPS) are resulting by using the following formulae:

$$(2) \quad \text{MPC} = \beta_1 \frac{C}{I} \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

$$(3) \quad \text{MPS} = 1 - \text{MPC} \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

Where,

β₁ = Elasticity of consumption to changes in income derived from the model (1)

C = Geometric mean value of annual consumption

I = Geometric mean value of annual household disposable income.

The equation (1) is assessed separately for sample households in each category.

The estimated equations of consumption function for sample respondents are obtainable in

the following table.

Estimated consumption empowerment function for the households of sample respondents

No. of Observations	Regression Coefficients			R ²	F-value
	β_0	β_1	β_2		
250	1.0148	0.2761*(1.1057)	0.1121*(2.318)	0.59	21.83

Note: Figures in parentheses denote t-values.

* Indicates that the coefficients are statistically significant at 5 percent level.

As revealed by the statistically significant value of R² the assessed equations are good fit and effective to draw implications. It is perceived from the Table that the two descriptive variables included in the model account for 59 percent of the variation in annual consumption expenditure of the respondents. The coefficient of disposable income and family size had a positive and statistically significant value. The elasticity of consumption empowerment with respect to income is 0.2761 and it is 0.1121 for the size of the family. Therefore,

consumption empowerment of expenditure of respondents augmented the annual income and also the size of the family augmented.

Assessment of contribution of Independent Variables to Social transformation of Scheduled Caste Women

To assess the effect of independent variables on the social transformation of scheduled caste women, stepwise multiple regression analysis was carried out. The results offered in the following table.

Summary of stepwise multiple regression dependent variable social transformation

Variables in Equation	Multiple R	R ²	F	P	Beta
Income	0.9644	0.93	153.14	0.01	0.94
Education	0.9815	0.97	137.21	0.01	0.14
Family Status (size)	0.9842	0.98	119.03	0.01	0.03

It determined that three of the variables attained into the equation and the order of addition was as follows monthly income, education and family status. It observed from the results that as each of the extra variables included, the values of multiple R and R² augmented. It stipulates

that the income of the respondent, education and family status were the best set of predictors of the social transformation of scheduled caste women having the related effect of about 97 percent. Transformation in any one of the variables, while others continued persistent, showed that it was the

income of the respondent which had the highest effect to the social Transformation of scheduled caste women followed by education and family status respectively. Thus stepwise regression analysis showed that the income of the respondents, education and

family status were the best set of predictors of the social transformation of respondents. Among these variables, income had a better power on the social transformation of respondents.

Garrett's score for problems faced by sample respondents

Sl.No.	Problems	Average Score	Rank
1.	Neglecting social functions	49.01	IV
2.	Verbal abuse	42.62	VI
3.	Discrimination from the public	53.51	III
4.	Irritation	46.85	V
5.	Unfriendliness	37.22	VII
6.	Lack of social status	68.27	I
7.	Nothing	61.43	II

Source: Computed from survey data

Table records the priority problems faced by the sample respondents. In the case of women respondents by using Garrett's score the first rank assigned to lack of social status followed by the scheduled caste women have not faced any problems in the society. The third and fourth prioritized problems were discrimination from the public and neglecting social functions. The fifth, sixth and seventh rank was given to the problem of irritation by forward castes followed by verbal abuse by forward castes in public, and unfriendliness respectively.

CONCLUSION

The present study delivers sufficient evidence to the fact that the social and economic status of scheduled caste women improved in the study area. This is due to the education improvement and also due the reservation to the scheduled caste women in many sectors. Caste system exists in the society. Majority of the respondents never reveal their caste in work place. Some respondent faced problems related to discrimination in work place and conflict with higher caste. Due to reservation in education and employment the financial condition of the scheduled caste women improved. The

possible outcomes of women empowerment through social transformation improved health and employment, enhanced social dignity and better status for scheduled caste women. Thus, economic independence no doubt empowered the scheduled caste women and contributed significantly to the social transformation.

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