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Profile of the indigenous tribals of the Nilgiris district

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Abstract

The Nilgiris is the moderately populated district of Tamil Nadu that has a rich tribal presence. Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu was purposively selected because it is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu in which more percentage of tribal population has been reported. Kotagiri and Udhamandalam blocks were purposively selected because these two blocks have relatively more percentage of the selected tribal communities. Multistage Random sampling method was adopted in selection of the respondents. Ex post facto research design was adopted. A sample of 60 tribals was randomly selected from each tribal community viz., todas, irulas and kotas. The total sample size is 180. An overwhelming majority.

Keywords: Tribal communities, The Nilgiris District, Multistage Random Sampling.

Introduction

The Nilgiris is the moderately populated district of Tamil Nadu that has a rich tribal presence. The tribal people differ in their social organizations and marital customs, rites and rituals, foods and other customs from the people of the rest of the state. Most of the tribal people speak in their own languages. The different ethnic groups have become well known for their distinct cultures and livelihoods, while maintaining key areas of inter-reliance. The main groups in the district are the Todas, Kota, Kurumba, Irula, Kattunayaka and Paniya who tend to occupy different altitudinal locations, which accounts for some of their cultural distinctions. Among these groups, the article throws light on the profile of the three main tribal groups viz., todas, irulas and kotas. The salient features of the major Scheduled Tribes are discussed below.

Materials and Methods

The Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu was purposively selected because it is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu in which more percentage of tribal population has been reported. Kotagiri and Udhamandalam blocks were purposively selected because these two blocks have relatively more percentage of the selected tribal communities viz., todas, irulas and kotas. Of these, three villages from Kotagiri block and three revenue villages from Udhamandalam block were further selected considering the maximum number of identified tribal habitations viz., todas, irulas and kotas. Multistage Random Sampling Method was selected. Totally 180 respondents were considered as sample of the respondents. Ex post facto research design was adopted.

Results and Discussion

The results are briefly tabulated and explained in detail below

Profile of the Indigenous Tribals

The profile of the tribals was surveyed and categorized using percentage analysis. The results have been presented below.

Profile of the Indigenous Tribals

The following were the profile of the tribal farmers. The results have been displayed in Table .

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Table 1: Distribution of tribal respondents according to their profile (n = 180)

| S. No. | Profile of the tribals | Category | No | percentage |
|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----|------------|
| 1. | Age | Young (upto 35 years) | 30 | 16.67 |
| | | Middle (35 to 45 years) | 91 | 50.56 |
| | | Old (more than 45 years) | 59 | 32.78 |
| 2. | Educational Status | Illiterate | 10 | 5.56 |
| | | Functionally literate | 8 | 4.44 |
| | | Primary education | 38 | 21.11 |
| | | Middle education | 54 | 30.00 |
| | | Secondary education | 70 | 38.89 |
| | | Collegiate education | - | - |
| 3. | Occupational Status | No occupation | - | - |
| | | Wage earner | 18 | 10.00 |
| | | Farming alone | 80 | 44.44 |
| | | Farming + wage earner | 82 | 45.56 |
| | | Private job | - | - |
| | | Service | - | - |
| 4. | Annual Income | Low (>Rs. 19,500) | 56 | 31.11 |
| | | Medium (Rs. 19,500 – 24,500) | 77 | 42.78 |
| | | High (>Rs. 24,500) | 47 | 26.11 |
| 5. | Farm Size | Upto 2.5 acres | 32 | 17.78 |
| | | 2.5 - 5 acres | 70 | 38.89 |
| | | 5.01 to 10 acres | 56 | 31.11 |
| | | Above 10 acres | 22 | 12.22 |
| 6. | Farming Experience | Upto 5 years | 15 | 8.33 |
| | | Above 5 and below 10 years | 102 | 56.67 |
| | | Above 10 years | 63 | 35.00 |
| 7. | Innovativeness | Low | 18 | 10.00 |
| | | Medium | 81 | 45.00 |
| | | High | 81 | 45.00 |
| 8. | Value orientation | Low | 33 | 18.33 |
| | | Medium | 104 | 57.78 |
| | | High | 43 | 23.89 |
| 9. | Fatalism-Scientism | Low | 37 | 20.56 |
| | | Medium | 24 | 13.33 |
| | | High | 109 | 60.56 |
| 10. | Conservatism-Liberalism | Low | 36 | 20.00 |
| | | Medium | 66 | 36.67 |
| | | High | 68 | 37.78 |
| 11. | Scientific Orientation | Low | 39 | 21.67 |
| | | Medium | 80 | 44.44 |
| | | High | 61 | 33.89 |
| 12. | Progressivism-Traditionalism | Low | 37 | 20.56 |
| | | Medium | 47 | 26.11 |
| | | High | 96 | 53.33 |
| 13. | Economic Motivation | Low | 59 | 32.78 |
| | | Medium | 68 | 37.78 |
| | | High | 53 | 29.44 |
| 14. | Religious Belief | Low | 23 | 12.78 |
| | | Medium | 31 | 17.22 |
| | | High | 126 | 70.00 |
| 15. | Family Norms | Low | 40 | 22.22 |
| | | Medium | 113 | 62.78 |
| | | High | 27 | 15.00 |

Age

The above table infers that among the total respondents, 50.56 per cent of the respondents were found in middle aged group followed by old (32.78%) and young (16.67%) aged groups. The middle aged are generally reported to be enthusiastic and have more strength, vigour and to meet challenges to perform their roles and to develop their personal status. That is why more number of middle aged tribal respondents were seen in their fields as well. It could be concluded that majority of the

tribal respondents with middle age were engaged in agricultural activities which made them to become aware and adopt agricultural technologies.

Educational Status

Nearly half (38.89%) of the tribal respondents were observed to have secondary education followed by middle school educated (30.00%) and primary school educated (21.11%). None of the respondents had education beyond secondary school level. This might be due to their need to involve in economic activity from the childhood due to poor economic condition, less interest, understanding and realization regarding importance of education in their life. The tribal respondents are more traditional and showing poor interest in taking formal education. The orthodox custom might be a reason to have low level of education among them.

Occupational status

Occupational status decides the extent of involvement of tribes in farm practices. It could be observed that farming and wage earners category existed more (45.56%) among the tribal respondents followed by farming alone (44.44%) category.

Annual Income

It is admitted on all hands that income is an important factor which influence human activity in many ways. It could be concluded that most of the tribal respondents were observed to earn an income range of Rs. 19,500 to Rs. 24,500.

Farm size

Farm size has been measured as the total acreage of land one possesses. Nearly half (38.89%) of the tribal respondents were found to operate medium size farms.

Farming Experience

Farming experience referred to the number of years of experience a respondent possessed in farming. It could be seen from the above table, that majority (56.67%) of the tribal respondents had five to ten years of farming experience.

Innovativeness

Innovativeness is measured in terms of the statements that at what period an individual agrees to adopt a technology. The overall analysis indicated that, nearly half of the respondents (45.00%) had medium and high level of innovativeness.

Value Orientation (Cosmopoliteness – Localiteness)

Cosmopoliteness - Localiteness refers to the tendency of an individual to maintain contacts with other social systems (cosmopolite) or to limit his contact within his own social system (localite). Nearly three-fourth (60.00%) of the respondents among kotas were having medium level of cosmopoliteness.

Fatalism - Scientism

Fatalism refers to the belief held by a farmer that human situation and acts are pre-determined by some super - natural power and can never be little influenced by individual violation or by acts of anyone else. Scientism as a belief held by a farmer that human situations and acts are the results natural and or social forces which can be understood and changed by violation or human effort. Majority (60.56%) of the tribal respondents had high level of fatalism.

Conservatism - Liberalism

It refers to the positive attitude of tribal respondents towards traditional institutions and practices. Nearly half of the tribal respondents (37.78%) were found to be more conservative.

Scientific Orientation

Scientific orientation reflects one's readiness or willingness to accept the recommended technologies. It encourages knowing the scientific rationale for the adoption of appropriate technologies. Nearly half (44.44%) of the respondents had medium level of scientific orientation followed by high (33.89%) and low levels (21.67%) of scientific orientation.

Progressivism - Traditionalism

Progressiveness was measured by the advanced thinking of the individual. Their motivation on their future and how far their needs were attained could be measured by the statements measured to give motivation on progressiveness. Majority of the respondents (53.33%) were progressive followed by medium (26.11%) and low levels (20.56%).

Economic Motivation

In the globalized commercial social system, every individual will have an urge to earn money. The farmers are not an exception. Economic motivation is one factor which influences the farmer to earn more money. Nearly half of the respondents (37.78%) had medium level of economic motivation followed by low (32.78%) level of economic motivation.

Religious Belief

Religious belief refers to the belief of the individual in accordance with his / her religions and its nexus to performance of occupation. The overall analysis indicated that nearly three-fourth (70.00%) of the respondents had high level of religious belief followed by medium level (17.22%).

Family Norms

Family norms reflect the norms of the tribal farm families. The overall analysis clearly indicated that majority (62.78%) of the tribal respondents had medium level of family norms.

Conclusion

In any social science research study, an absolute understanding about the subjects is required for meaningful interpretation of the findings. Profile of the respondents would serve as a base for clear and thorough understanding about the subject. The local extension authorities should make an analytical assessment of these characteristics.

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