

An Economic Analysis of Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women in Thoothukudi District of Tamilnadu

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Abstract

Economic growth in India has been robust over the past period. Though, the caste disparities are cumulative, the condition of schedule caste women in India needs distinct consideration. They are one of the major socially isolated groups anywhere in the world, and make up 2% of the world's total population. The focus of the paper was to explore the economic empowerment of scheduled caste women workers in Thoothukudi district. 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 120 scheduled caste women workers of Thoothukudi District using simple random sampling method. For data analysis, percentage analysis, tabulation, averages, standard deviation, t test, chi square test and probability analysis tools are used. The data relates to the month of May 2017. The economic impact of the quality of life of scheduled caste women was found high in the variables namely communication skill, self-hygiene and health, skill up gradation, accessibility of resources, standard of living and child care and child education. The mean score values of these variables are 3.76, 2.53, 3.57, 2.91, 4.14 and 3.75 respectively. The significant difference among the quality of life of scheduled caste women after getting employment by the reservations of seats is found high in all aspects of quality of life except technical guidance, decision making in family, sociability and purchase of assets and self-confidence since its respective 't' statistic are not significant at 5 per cent level. Schedule caste women are in no way mediocre to other caste people. Government is providing many chances to advance the social, political, economic and educational conditions of schedule caste women.

Keywords: Empowerment; Informal; Inequality; Poverty Reduction; Sociological; Psychological.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the number of women living in absolute poverty rose by 50 per cent as against 30 per cent for rural men [1]. Women in India constitute 89 per cent of the informal and unrecognised sector; their participation rate is higher in rural areas. Women account for one-third of the labour force of India and 90 per cent of the rural-urban women are unskilled workers [2]. While women

and girls bear the largest and most direct costs of these inequality, the costs cut broadly across society, ultimately hindering development and poverty reduction [3]. Today, empowerment of schedule caste women is one of the significant issues undertaken by India. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social development that helps people gain control over their own lives, communities and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important [4].

Empowerment occurs within sociological, psychological and economic spheres and at various levels, such as individual, group and community. Empowerment challenges our assumption about the status quo asymmetrical power relationships and social dynamics [5]. The scheduled castes have gained by the reservations of seats in schools, colleges, and professional and technical institutions and reservations of jobs [6]. The focus of the paper was to explore the economic empowerment of scheduled caste women workers in Thoothukudi district.

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Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of the sample scheduled caste women workers in the study area.
2. To find out the occupational background of sample scheduled caste women workers.
3. To examine the economic empowerment of women workers and
4. To analyse the economic impact of quality of life of scheduled caste women after gained by the reservations of seats on employment.

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 120 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, t test, chi square test and probability analysis tools are used. The data relates to the month of May 2017.

Literature Review

Suma Chitnis (1972) [7] in his study stated that programmes for the betterment of the status of the Scheduled Castes have concentrated heavily on their education. Patwardhan (1974) [8] in her study analyzed the kind and degree of mobility among Scheduled Castes in an urban context. She found that untouchables were still facing ritual, economic and social disabilities.

Uma Ramaswamy (1974) [9] in his study examined how far the Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh have benefited from the various measures for their advancement. He found that the Scheduled Castes continue overwhelmingly in their traditional occupations in rural areas. Even in the urban areas only a fraction of the posts in the administration which are reserved for them is actually filled. Completion of formal education even upto the secondary level is negligible.

Kusum K. Premi (1974) [10] made a study on the role of protective discrimination in equalisation through educational opportunities. The study found that marked progress has been made by the Scheduled Castes in education, as is manifest from the rise in their literacy rates, enrolment co-efficients and the proportion of their numbers in Class I and II categories of jobs in Central and state services.

Victor S. D'Souza (1975) [11] in his study found that efforts made in India to advance economic development and to reduce inequalities, while yielding small gains in economic growth have resulted in a further increase in inequalities.

Dubey (1975) [12] in his study found that highest percentage of the students going for higher education are of parents having higher literacy status as well as doing white collar jobs. His study also found that majority of the urban scheduled caste students are going for higher education when compared to the rural scheduled caste students.

Hanumantha Rao (1977) [13] in his work stated that structural changes taken place in the economy did not help the economic development of the Scheduled Castes. They continue to be landless and poor. Changes in technology induced some degree of growth in the rural economy, but this is mainly in the tertiary sector into which Scheduled Castes have little access.

Hanumantha Rayappa and Deepak Grover (1979) [14] in their study examined the problem of employment and unemployment among the weaker sections of the community, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the various attempts made by the government to improve their living and working conditions. They found that the credit needs of these weaker sections are mainly to meet household subsistence expenses, which are met by the moneylenders, traders and landlord resulting in varying degrees of bondage. Another facet of poverty among these sections is the ownership of fewer assets such as agricultural land.

Suneila Malik (1979) [15] investigated the relative impacts of changing educational and occupational levels on the life-pattern of the scheduled castes by highlighting the effectiveness of developmental measures taken so far.

He found that the developmental measures have aided social mobility among the scheduled castes to some extent. Still a large majority of the Scheduled Castes are not able to benefit to the fullest extent from these developmental measures due to loopholes in the implementation mechanism.

Santha Kumari (1983) [16] in her study found that education has enabled the respondents to learn the habits of high castes like cleanliness, method of preparation of food so that this would make their food acceptable to high caste guests. Vakil (1985) [17] in his study stated that economic, educational and political facilities have not yet reached certain Scheduled Castes and hence they are facing a precarious condition. Unorganized nature of the Scheduled Castes, lack of leadership among them is mainly responsible for their backwardness.

Chaturvedi (1986) [18] in his study found that financial condition of Scheduled Caste students enrolled in colleges was difficult. The majority of the scheduled castes college students were first generation college goers. Raju (1992) [19] in his study found that Scheduled Castes are placed at a much lower level both socially and economically when

compared to the non-scheduled castes. Sudha Pai (2000) [20] in his study found that Scheduled Castes constitute disadvantaged, economically poor and socially backward groups. Owning little land, with low levels of literacy, they suffer from low levels of urbanisation, employment and wages due to lack of rapid industrial development.

Narayan Mishra (2001) [21] in his study found that Scheduled Caste people are much behind the people of other caste. He suggested that great effort and attention is required for improving their status by the government. Maurya (2001) [22] found that in spite of various protective, promotive and developmental measures initiated by the government for the social and economic upliftment of scheduled castes, the target groups are not able to overcome the age old deprivation of caste system.

Analysis of Data and Interpretation

Table 1: Age wise details of Sample Women workers

S. No	Age (years)	Women workers	Percentage
1	20-25	14	12
2	25-30	42	35
3	30-35	28	23
4	35-40	24	20
5	40-45	12	10
	Total	120	100

Table 2: Religion wise details of sample women workers

S. No.	Religion	Women workers	Percentage
1	Christian	58	48
2	Hindu	62	52
	Total	120	100

Table 3: Education details of sample women workers

S. No.	Education	Women workers	Percentage
1	Primary	19	16
2	Secondary	21	18
3	Higher secondary	28	23
4	College / Technical	39	32
5	Illiterate	13	11
	Total	120	100

Source: Survey

The Table 1 shows that 35 percent of the scheduled caste women workers are in the age group of 25-30 years, 23 percent of the women workers are in the age group of 30-35 years, 20 percent of the women workers are in the age group of 35-40 years, 12 percent of the women workers are the age group of 20-25 years, 10 percent of the women workers are the age group of 40-45 years.

The Table 2 clearly exhibits the religion details of scheduled caste women workers. It reveals 52 percentages of women workers belong to Hindus and 48 percentages of women workers belong to Christians.

The Table 3 shows the educational status of the scheduled caste women workers. 16 percent of the workers completed only primary education. 18

Table 4: Marital status of the sample women workers

S. No.	Marital Status	Women workers	Percentage
1	Married	84	70
2	Unmarried	36	30
	Total	120	100

Source: Survey

Table 5: Family size of sample women workers

S. No	Family Size	Women workers	Percentage
1	1-3	40	33
2	4-5	80	67
	Total	120	100

Table 6: Residential position of the sample women workers

S. No.	Residential Position	Women workers	Percentage
1	Owned	82	68
2	Rented	38	32
	Total	120	100

Source: Survey

Table 7: Occupational background of the sample women workers

S. No	Occupation	Women workers	Percentage
1	Professionals	7	5.8
2	Business	9	7.5
3	Government Employee	13	10.8
4.	House wife	5	4.2
5.	Farmers	63	52.5
6.	Private Employee	23	19.2
	Total	120	100

Table 8: Work experience of sample women workers

S. No	Years	Women workers	Percentage
1	1-10	50	42
2	10-20	52	43
3	20-30	18	15
	Total	120	100

percentages of them studied secondary school level, 23 percentages of them studied higher secondary school level, 32 percent of them are having the college / technical level and 11 percent of them are illiterates.

The Table 4 shows that 70 percent of the scheduled caste women workers are married and 30 percent of the workers are unmarried.

The Table 5 shows that 67 percent of the sample scheduled caste women workers have 4-5 members in their family and 33 percent of the people have 1-3 members in their family

The Table 6 reveals that the housing facility of sample scheduled caste women workers. 68 percent of the sample women workers have owned houses and 32 percent of the women workers have rented houses.

It has been observed from Table 7 the occupational background of 120 sample scheduled caste women workers. Out of the total, 7 (5.8 percent) of the women workers have occupational background as a professionals, 9 (7.5 percent) of the women workers having business 13 (10.8) percent women workers as Government employee background. 63 (52.5 percent) of the women workers have an important background of farmers, and 23 (19.2 percent) of the sample women workers have a background of private employee. Only 5 (4.2 percent) of the women workers have housewife as self help group members.

The Table 7 concludes that only 10.8 per cent of the respondents said that they obtained employment in Government whereas as many as 89.2 per cent replied negatively.

Table 9: Monthly income of the sample women workers

S. No.	Monthly Income (Rs)	Women workers	Percentage
1	3000 – 5000	24	20
2	5000 – 7000	14	12
3	7000 – 9000	32	26
4	9000 – 11000	19	16
5	11000 – 13000	14	12
6	13,000 and above	17	14
	Total	120	100

Source: Survey

Table 10: Monthly savings of sample women workers

S. No	Savings Particular	No. of Women workers	Percentage
1	Yes	82	68
2	No	38	32
	Total	120	100

Source: Survey

The Table 8 shows that 43 percent of the sample scheduled caste women workers having the work experience of 10-20 years, 42 percent of the sample women workers have 1- 10 years and 15 percent of the sample women workers have the work experience of 20-30.

The Table 9 displays that 26 percent of the sample scheduled caste women workers have the income Rs 7000 – 9000 and 20 percent of them are earning Rs.

3000 – 5000 and 16 percent of them are earning Rs 9000 – 11000 and 14 percent of them are earning Rs. 13000 and above, 12 percent of them have the income of 11000 – 13000 and 12 percent of them have the income of 5000 – 7000. The monthly average income of the sample women workers is Rs.9, 755/-

The Table 10 reveals that only 68 percent of the women workers are having the savings habits and 32 percent of the women workers are not having the habit of savings.

Table 11: Relationship between Economic empowerment and level of perception

S. No	Economic Empowerment	Percentage of Respondents	
		Yes	No
1	Improved wage rate and social status	68.13	31.87
2	Reduced Indebtedness	66.97	33.03
3	Better Savings	73.52	26.48
4	Increased Standard of Living	62.83	37.17
	Total	100	100

Economic Empowerment

Null hypothesis: There is no significant difference between economic empowerment and their level of perception of scheduled caste women workers.

Economic empowerment is the primary aspect of women enhancement. 68.13% respondents were of the view that the wage rate and social status has increased through their work and 66.97% respondents were of the observation that dependence of agriculture reduced indebtedness. Further 73.52 per cent of them stated that agriculture has resulted better savings and 62.83% respondents were of the view that increased standard of living of women (Table 11).

In order to find out whether there is any correlation in the awareness of economic empowerment and their level of perception, chi-square test has been applied.

The results of the Chi-square test are furnished below.

Calculated value of Chi-square	= 53.78
Table value at 5 per cent level	= 7.815
Degrees of freedom	= 3

As the calculated value of Chi-square is greater than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance, there is a relationship in the awareness of economic empowerment of work and their level of perception of the respondents in the study area.

Economic Impact of Quality of Life

The concept of quality of life includes not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social fitting. The

quality of life is the degree to which an individual enjoys the important possibilities of his or her Life [23].

In the present study, the economic impact of quality of life of scheduled caste women after gained by the reservations of seats on employment are measured through ten selective variables such as communication skill, standard of living, decision

making in family, self-hygiene and health, skill up gradation, accessibility of resources, technical guidance, sociability and purchase of assets, self-confidence and child care and child education. Each of the ten variables is measured with the help of responses to relevant questions in respect to each construct by using a five point to scale technique according to their level of knowledge namely strongly

Table 12: Economic impact of quality of life

Sl. No.	Impact of quality of life	Mean	S.D	T-test
1.	communication skill	3.76	1.9526	1.7452*
2.	technical guidance	1.31	0.0184	0.2101
3.	decision making in family	2.17	0.4106	0.1252
4.	self-hygiene and health	2.53	1.3864	2.8852*
5.	skill up gradation	3.57	1.4827	2.5877*
6.	accessibility of resources	2.91	1.3431	1.2542*
7.	standard of living	4.14	1.8746	3.2216*
8.	sociability and purchase of assets	2.01	1.2143	2.1202
9.	self-confidence	2.22	1.4625	1.3114
10.	child care and child education	3.75	1.4679	2.7156*

* Significant at 5 per cent level

agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' which carries 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 marks respectively. In order to examine the differences in mean score values of each variable of the economic impact of quality of life of scheduled caste women, the computed mean score values and t-values are presented in the following table.

According to Table 12, the economic impact of quality of life of scheduled caste women was found low in the variables namely technical guidance, decision making in family, sociability and purchase of assets and self-confidence. The mean score values of these variables are 1.31, 2.17, 2.01 and 2.22 respectively.

The economic impact of the quality of life of scheduled caste women was found high in the variables namely communication skill, self-hygiene and health, skill up gradation, accessibility of resources, standard of living and child care and child education.

The mean score values of these variables are 3.76, 2.53, 3.57, 2.91, 4.14 and 3.75 respectively. The significant difference among the quality of life of scheduled caste women after getting employment by the reservations of seats is found high in all aspects of quality of life except technical guidance, decision making in family, sociability and purchase of assets and self-confidence since its respective 't' statistic are not significant at 5 percent level.

Conclusion

Schedule caste women are in no way mediocre to other caste people. Government is providing many chances to advance the social, political, economic and educational conditions of schedule caste women. Lastly they must come on their own consensus to grow themselves by reaching will power and confidence which cannot be given by anybody.

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