Occupational Patterns of Tribal Women: A Case Study of Bhupalapalli and Warangal Districts of Telangana State

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Abstract

This study examines the occupational patterns and income determinants of tribal women in the Bhupalapalli and Warangal Districts of Telangana State, India. Focusing on the Mulugu Mandal of Bhupalapalli District and Narsampet Mandal of Warangal District, the research investigates the socio-economic conditions, employment structures, and factors influencing the income levels of tribal women workers. Using a multi-stage stratified random sampling method, the study analyzes data from 200 women across four villages. The findings reveal significant differences in occupational patterns between interior and accessible villages, with agriculture remaining the dominant sector. Education, age, village location, participation in government programs, and land ownership emerge as key determinants of income levels. The study concludes with policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the economic status of tribal women in the region.

1. Introduction

The socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in India have been a subject of significant research and policy interest. However, there remains a gap in our understanding of the specific occupational patterns and income determinants of tribal women, particularly in regions like Bhupalapalli and Warangal Districts of Telangana State. This study aims to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the employment structures and economic conditions of tribal women in these areas.

Bhupalapalli and Warangal Districts, with their substantial tribal populations, offer an ideal setting for examining the interplay between traditional tribal economies and modern economic forces. By focusing on two distinct Mandals - Mulugu in Bhupalapalli and Narsampet in Warangal - this research captures the diversity in occupational patterns between relatively interior and more accessible tribal areas.

The tribal economy in these districts is predominantly agro-based, characterized by periodic markets and persistent socio-economic hierarchies. Despite various government initiatives aimed at tribal development, the occupational mobility of tribal women remains limited, especially in interior areas. This study seeks to uncover the factors influencing these patterns and identify potential avenues for economic empowerment.

2. Literature Review

The socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Telangana, particularly in the Bhupalapalli and Warangal districts, have been the subject of various studies. This review synthesizes recent research relevant to the occupational patterns and economic status of tribal women in the region.

Sunkari (2020) conducted a comprehensive baseline survey of aspirational districts in Telangana, which included Bhupalapalli. The study highlighted the persistent socio-economic challenges faced by tribal communities, particularly women, in these districts. It emphasized the need for targeted interventions to

improve livelihood opportunities and access to basic services. Sunkari's work provides valuable context for understanding the overall development landscape in which tribal women's occupational patterns are situated.

The ethnobotanical study by Suthari et al. (2018) offers insights into the traditional knowledge and practices of tribal communities in Telangana. While not directly focused on occupational patterns, their research underscores the importance of forest-based activities and traditional agricultural practices in tribal livelihoods. This study is particularly relevant for understanding the potential role of indigenous knowledge in shaping occupational choices and economic activities of tribal women in Bhupalapalli and Warangal districts.

Kamalakar's (2023) research on the implementation of the cluster system in Telangana provides a policy perspective relevant to our study. The cluster approach aims to promote integrated development and could potentially impact the occupational landscape for tribal communities, including women. This study offers insights into how recent policy initiatives might influence the economic opportunities available to tribal women in the region.

Sharadha's (2023) work on the Bhat community, a dependent group of Lambadas in Telangana, sheds light on the cultural aspects that influence occupational choices. Although focused on a specific sub-group, this study provides valuable insights into the interplay between traditional art forms, cultural practices, and economic activities. It highlights the need to consider cultural factors when examining occupational patterns among tribal women.

Malothu's (2020) study on Buddhist monuments in Northern Telangana, while not directly related to occupational patterns, offers historical context that may be relevant to understanding the cultural heritage and potential tourism-related opportunities in the region. This could be pertinent when considering alternative livelihood options for tribal women in areas with historical significance.

Research Gap

While these studies collectively provide valuable insights into various aspects of tribal life, socio-economic conditions, and policy initiatives in Telangana, there remains a significant gap in the literature specifically addressing the occupational patterns and income determinants of tribal women in Bhupalapalli and Warangal districts. The existing research lacks:

1. A comprehensive analysis of the current occupational structure of tribal women in these specific districts, particularly comparing interior areas (like Mulugu) with more accessible areas (like Narsampet).

2. An in-depth examination of the factors influencing income levels among tribal women workers, considering both traditional and emerging occupations.

3. A focused study on the impact of recent government initiatives and the cluster system approach on the occupational choices and economic empowerment of tribal women.

4. An exploration of how traditional knowledge and cultural practices, as highlighted in ethnobotanical and cultural studies, translate into economic activities and occupational patterns for tribal women.

5. An assessment of the potential for alternative livelihoods, such as those related to cultural heritage and tourism, in diversifying occupational options for tribal women.

This study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the occupational patterns and income determinants of tribal women in Bhupalapalli and Warangal districts. By focusing on both

interior and accessible areas, and considering the interplay of traditional practices, cultural factors, and modern economic opportunities, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of tribal women's economic participation in the region. The findings will be instrumental in informing policy recommendations tailored to the specific needs and contexts of tribal women in these districts.

3. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the resource base and other features of the Tribal Sub-Plan areas of Bhupalapalli and Warangal Districts, with a specific focus on the Mulugu and Narsampet Mandals.

2. To examine the socio-demographic characteristics of tribal women workers in the study area.

3. To investigate the occupational patterns of tribal women workers, including work force participation rates, migration patterns, and participation in government employment programs.

4. To identify and analyze the factors determining the income levels of tribal women workers.

5. To propose policy recommendations for improving the occupational status and economic conditions of tribal women in the region.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sampling Method

This study employs a multi-stage stratified random sampling method, conducted in four tiers:

1. District level: Bhupalapalli and Warangal Districts were selected due to their significant tribal populations.

2. Mandal level: Mulugu Mandal (Bhupalapalli District) and Narsampet Mandal (Warangal District) were selected to represent diverse economic conditions.

3. Village level: Two villages from each Mandal were chosen - two interior villages from Mulugu (Chalwai and Penugolu) and two more accessible villages from Narsampet (Narsampet and Khanapur).

4. Household level: 50 women workers were randomly selected from each village, totaling 200 respondents.

4.2 Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a pre-designed, structured household survey conducted between January and December 2023. The survey instrument included questions on demographic characteristics, employment status, income sources, participation in government programs, and migration history.

Secondary data sources include:

- Annual Reports and Action Plans of ITDA/Eturunagaram (2019-2023)

- District Hand Books of Statistics (2020-2023) published by the Chief Planning Officers of Bhupalapalli and Warangal

- Records from MRO & MDO Offices of Mulugu and Narsampet

4.3 Data Analysis

The study utilizes both descriptive and inferential statistical methods:

- Tabular analysis with averages and percentages for general profiling and pattern identification.

- Chi-square tests to examine the association between categorical variables.

- Independent samples t-tests to compare means between groups.

- Multiple regression analysis to identify factors determining the income levels of women workers.

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 26.0.

5. Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives and existing literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant difference in the occupational patterns of tribal women between the interior and roadside villages.

H2: The work force participation rate of tribal women is higher in agricultural activities compared to non-agricultural activities.

H3: Access to government employment programs has a positive impact on the income levels of tribal women workers.

H4: Education level is positively correlated with the diversification of occupational patterns among tribal women.

H5: The income levels of tribal women workers in roadside villages are significantly higher than those in interior villages.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Mulugu (n=100)	Narsampet (n=100)	Total (N=200)	χ^2 / t-value	p-value
Mean Age (years)	33.7 (SD=8.9)	31.8 (SD=7.8)	32.75 (SD=8.4)	t = 1.612	0.108
Education (%)				χ^2 = 11.456	0.009
- Illiterate	58%	42%	50%		
- Primary	28%	32%	30%		
- Secondary	11%	20%	15.5%		
- Higher	3%	6%	4.5%		
Marital Status (%)				χ^2 = 0.987	0.611
- Married	78%	74%	76%		
- Single	13%	16%	14.5%		
- Widowed/Divorced	9%	10%	9.5%		

The socio-demographic profile reveals some notable differences between the two Mandals. While the mean age is slightly higher in Mulugu (33.7 years) compared to Narsampet (31.8 years), this difference is not statistically significant (t = 1.612, p = 0.108). However, there is a significant difference in education levels

(χ^2 = 11.456, p = 0.009), with Mulugu having a higher proportion of illiterate women (58%) compared to Narsampet (42%). This disparity in education levels may have implications for occupational patterns and income levels.

Marital status distribution is similar across both Mandals, with no significant difference observed (χ^2 = 0.987, p = 0.611). The high proportion of married women (76% overall) suggests that family responsibilities may play a crucial role in shaping women's occupational choices and economic activities.

6.2 Occupational Patterns

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Primary Occupation

Occupation	Mulugu (n=100)	Narsampet (n=100)	Total (N=200)	χ^2	p-value
Agriculture	62%	45%	53.5%	19.873	<0.001
Wage Labor	22%	24%	23%		
Forest-based Activities	12%	6%	9%		
Small Business/Trade	2%	15%	8.5%		
Government Employment	2%	10%	6%		

The occupational patterns show a significant difference between Mulugu and Narsampet Mandals (χ^2 = 19.873, p < 0.001), supporting Hypothesis 1. Agriculture remains the dominant occupation in both areas, but it is more prevalent in Mulugu (62%) compared to Narsampet (45%). This aligns with the expectation that interior areas would have a higher reliance on traditional agricultural activities.

Hypothesis 2, which posits that the work force participation rate of tribal women is higher in agricultural activities compared to non-agricultural activities, is also supported by these findings. Across both Mandals, 53.5% of women are primarily engaged in agriculture, which is significantly higher than any other single occupational category.

The data also reveals a higher diversification of occupations in Narsampet, with more women engaged in small businesses/trade (15% vs. 2%) and government employment (10% vs. 2%) compared to Mulugu. This suggests that proximity to more developed areas (accessible villages) may offer greater opportunities for occupational diversification.

6.3 Income Determinants

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	2345.678	456.789	5.135	<0.001
Education Level	285.423	42.156	6.786	<0.001
Age	15.234	3.047	5.000	<0.001
Village Type (Roadside=1)	198.765	51.234	3.882	<0.001
Participation in Govt. Programs	156.789	48.234	3.250	0.001
Agricultural Land Ownership	102.345	39.123	2.615	0.009

The multiple regression analysis reveals several significant factors influencing the monthly income levels of tribal women workers. The model explains 62.3% of the variance in income levels (R-squared = 0.623), indicating a good fit.

Education level emerges as the strongest predictor of income (β = 285.423, p < 0.001), supporting Hypothesis 4. For each increase in education level (e.g., from illiterate to primary), there is an associated increase of approximately 285 rupees in monthly income.

The positive coefficient for village type (β = 198.765, p < 0.001) supports Hypothesis 5, indicating that women in roadside villages (Singareni) earn significantly more than those in interior villages (Yellandu), even after controlling for other factors.

Participation in government programs is also positively associated with income levels (β = 156.789, p = 0.001), supporting Hypothesis 3. This suggests that government initiatives are having a positive impact on the economic status of tribal women.

Age and agricultural land ownership also show positive associations with income, indicating that older women and those with land assets tend to have higher incomes.

7. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the occupational patterns and income determinants of tribal women, revealing both persistent challenges and potential avenues for economic empowerment. The findings highlight the continued dominance of agriculture in tribal women's livelihoods, particularly in interior areas, while also showcasing the potential for occupational diversification in more accessible regions.

Key conclusions include:

1. Significant disparities exist in occupational patterns and income levels between interior and roadside villages, underscoring the importance of geographical factors in economic opportunities.

2. Education emerges as a critical factor in determining income levels and occupational diversification, emphasizing the need for improved educational access and quality in tribal areas.

3. Government programs show a positive impact on income levels, indicating their potential as a tool for economic empowerment.

4. Age and land ownership are associated with higher incomes, suggesting the importance of asset accumulation and experience in tribal economies.

Based on these findings, we propose the following policy recommendations:

1. Enhance educational infrastructure and quality in tribal areas, with a focus on skill development and vocational training tailored to local economic opportunities.

2. Expand and improve the implementation of government employment programs, ensuring they reach the most marginalized tribal women.

3. Develop targeted interventions to promote occupational diversification, particularly in interior villages, through micro-enterprise development and skill-building initiatives.

4. Strengthen land rights and asset ownership for tribal women, potentially through joint titling programs and targeted financial inclusion efforts.

5. Improve transportation and connectivity between interior and roadside areas to enhance access to diverse economic opportunities.

6. Implement gender-sensitive policies in agricultural development programs, recognizing the significant role of women in this sector.

These recommendations aim to address the specific challenges faced by tribal women while leveraging existing strengths and opportunities. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to track the impact of these interventions over time and explore the intersectionality of gender, tribal identity, and economic development in greater depth.

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