



Determinants Of Tribal Women Empowerment With Reference Their Social And Economical Perspectives – A Study In Visakhapatnam District

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Abstract

The development of women in general and tribal women in particular to empower them has been the centre stage of various developments planning both at the central as well as state levels in India. It is opined that in general the political and economic conditions of tribal women is more depressed and neglected than that of non tribal counterpart. Andhra Pradesh is the traditional home of nearly 33 tribal groups and most of these communities are found inhabiting in the border areas of Andhra Pradesh, especially in the North and North-East, and highest Scheduled Tribe population is found in Khammam and Visakhapatnam districts. The state has taken up a number of policies to promote, preserve and strengthen the economic and political empowerment of tribal women. Economic empowerment of tribal women is an essential issue of tribal development. In this purpose this paper aimed to study the determinants of tribal women empowerment with reference to their social and economical perspectives. Therefore, The major findings of this paper based on data analysis discussed above, the different aspects like age, religion, education, vocational training, occupation, family type, family size, dependence ratio, dwelling house, amenities in house, social status, economic status, individual property, health status and politics status concerning the lives of tribal women, which are determining their empowerment. Among these education, vocational training, occupation, amenities in house, economic status, individual properties and health status of tribal women impact more on empowerment of tribal women. Therefore, special attention need to be paid to provide better education, awareness on economic activities and health care, which will lead to improvement of women's physical health and economic status.

Keywords: Tribal, women empowerment, social, economical

Introduction

Women in India are entitled to equal rights with men according to the constitution and laws established by the government. However, rural women do not enjoy the same social and economic freedoms as men, as is the case in urban areas (Kumar, 2013; Agrawal and Khare, 2019). They still rely on men to provide the family's income and spend most of their time on household chores (Datta and Gailey, 2012). Empowering women can serve as a cornerstone for development to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in relation to families, communities, and even nations (Williams et al., 2022). Thus, empowerment of women in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban/rural), educational status, social status and age. Policies on women empowerment exist at the national, state, and local levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities and political participation. However, there are significant gaps between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level. One key factor for the gap in implementation of laws and policies to address discrimination, economic disadvantages and social imbalance of women at the community level is the largely patriarchal structure that governs the community and households in much of India. As such, women have restricted mobility, access to education, access to health facilities, and lower decision-making power, and experience higher rates of gender discrimination.

Women in a tribal society play a vital role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life and are considered as an economic asset in their society (Heggade & Heggade, 2017). But they are still lagging far behind in the different walks of life like education, employment, good health and economic empowerment etc. Though they are industrious, they have limited control over resources and economic activities (Thomas and Sukhi, 2013). Therefore, the tribal women being economically poor and socially backward live at a low level of scale of the quality life (Sahaya Leoni and Indhumathi, 2020). In this context there is a need for economic empowerment of tribal women in order to overcome inequality, discrimination and exploitation and to achieve their all round development in the society (Bano, Zenab, 2002).

Literature Review

Sasmitarani and Debendra Kumar (2022) said meaningful inclusive growth of the country is not possible without empowerment of tribal women. In this context the authors observed in their study that while the educational status of

tribal women is very low, the empowerment of these women is challenging issue in the present scenario. Therefore, the empowerment of tribal women could be possible with accelerating their socio-economic development and active participation of these women in various activities is essential. Mamata Sahu (2022) noticed in her study that tribal women observing the rituals of other community women and observances modern education, employment opportunities and impact of modernization slowly empower them for getting equal share in every sphere. Amit Soni (2019) stated that tribal women in India amply contribute in livelihood activities along with performing household chores and family responsibilities. Despite several economic, political and social changes, tribal women are still far behind. Moreover, the studies on empowerment of women through income-generating activities are commonly conducted, however, tribal studies in this area are rare and have not addressed the tribes located in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh state, where women have been neglected or excluded from research. Since, there have been no studies on empowerment of tribal women with reference to social, economical and political aspects in the Visakhapatnam District, which is part of the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, and no previous statistical studies have been conducted on the significance of the statistical relationship between women's empowerment, and social, economical and political dimensions. These are the research gaps that this study will address, making it distinct from other studies. The urgent need to understand how tribal women can empower with a distant vision for both the government and policy makers, and it should motivate researchers to conduct future research.

Need and significance

The Government has adopted a holistic approach for overall development of tribal population, including tribal women, by providing support, inter alia, for education, health, employment, agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, sanitation, drinking water, skill development and livelihood across the country including the state of Andhra Pradesh. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been implementing schemes/ programmes with focused approach on the socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes (STs), including tribal women, in a coordinated and planned manner (PIB Delhi, 17 Mar 2023). Since, the tribes remain disadvantaged due to various factors like geographical and cultural isolation, lack of proper health facilities, inability to satisfy basic needs, lack of control over resources and assets, lack of education and skills, malnutrition, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, lack of access to proper infrastructure facilities and technologies and lack of political freedom and voice (Lakshmi & Paul, 2019).

Methodology

Since this study is aimed to investigate the social and economic status of tribal women with reference to their empowerment, this research confined to Visakhapatnam District in Andhra Pradesh as the study area. The present composition of the population of Visakhapatnam district may be broadly classified under three revenue divisions: (1) Visakhapatnam, (2) Narsipatnam and (3) Paderu, and 43 mandals. Among these Visakhapatnam is Urban division, Narsipatnam is Rural division and Paderu. The Paderu division constituted with 11 mandal, out of which 3 mandals are containing more than 10 thousand tribal population (Census, 2011). These 3 mandals are: (1) Pedabayalu (10,593), (2) Paderu (12,604) and (3) Aruku (15,960). Hence, the sample of 287 tribal women in these 3 mandals has been selected for this study on random sampling method. Since this study is aimed at the social and economic status of tribal women with reference to their empowerment in selected mandals in Visakhapatnam District, significant number of respondents comprised of tribal working woman generally between the age group of 18-60. This study has adopted the following criteria while selecting the required number of respondents from the sample demarked, for the purpose of this study:

Table-1: Socio-demographic distribution of tribal women

Socio-demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age group (in years)	18 – 30	35	12.2
	31 - 45	130	45.3
	46 - 55	97	33.8
	56 - 60	25	8.7
Literacy levels	Illiterate	25	8.7
	Primary	49	17.0
	Secondary	104	36.2
	Undergraduate	46	16.0
	Graduate	42	14.6
Vocational training	Postgraduate	21	7.3
	Yes	208	72.4
	No	79	27.5
Occupation	House wife	110	38.3
	Government employee	36	12.5
	Private employee	69	24.0
	Labour	36	12.5
	Business	34	11.8

	Self employee	2	0.7
Type of family	Nuclear	168	58.5
	Joint	88	30.6
	Extended	31	10.8
Family-size	1 – 3 members	87	30.3
	4 – 6 members	143	49.8
	> 6 members	57	19.9
Number of dependents in each home	Nil	80	27.8
	1 - members	59	20.5
	2 - members	118	41.1
	> 2 members	30	10.4
Number of rooms in the house	1 – Room	78	27.1
	2 - Rooms	77	26.8
	3 - Rooms	101	35.2
	Above 3 - Rooms	31	10.8
Religion	Hindu	167	58.1
	Christian	86	30.0
	Muslims	34	12.0
	Total	287	100.0

The Table-1 represents the socio-demographic distribution of the sample respondents of tribal women who are considered for this study. The distribution of tribal women by their age-group shows that out of the total respondents a dominate group of 45.3 percent are in the age group of 31-45 years followed by 46-55 years age group (33.8%) and from the rest (12.2%) are in the age group of 18-30 years and 8.7 percent are in 56-60 years age group. The religion wise distribution of tribal women in the study area reveals that out of total respondents a majority of respondents 58.1 percent belongs to Hindu religion and 30.0 percent Christian religion and rest of the respondents 12.0 percent belongs to Muslim religion. The distribution of tribal women by their literacy level indicate that out of total respondents a dominated group of 36.2 percent studied up to secondary education level followed by 17.0 percent at primary level, 16.0 percent undergraduates, 14.6 percent graduates and only 8.7 percent of respondents Illiterates. Regarding vocational training taken by the respondents the data shows that 72.4 percent have taken vocational training and the rest 27.5 percent not taken vocational training. The occupational distribution of the respondents revealed that 38.3 percent are house wives and from the rest 24.0 percent are private employees, 12.5 percent are Government employees, 12.5 percent are laborers, 11.8 percent are with some kind of business and only 0.7 percent self employees. Regarding type of family, 58.5 percent are belongs to nuclear family, 30.6 percent are in joint family and 10.8 percent are in extended family. The family size of the respondents indicate that 49.8 percent families are with 4–6 members, 30.3 percent families are with 1–3 members and 19.9 percent are with more than 6 members in the family. The number of dependents in the family of respondent shows that 41.1 percent are with 2 depends, 20.5 percent are with 1 dependent, and 10.4 percent are with more than 2 dependents. The numbers of rooms existing in the house of respondents shows 35.2 percent have 3 rooms, 26.8 percent have 2 rooms, 27.1 percent have 1 room, and 10.8 percent have more than 3 rooms in their house.

Table-2: Available basic amenities in the house

Basic Amenities	Frequency	Percentage
Individual tap water	151	52.6
Electricity	143	49.8
Television	141	49.1
Fridge	164	57.1
2 Wheeler	168	58.5
4 Wheeler	189	65.9

The above Table-2 shows the basic facilities available at the households of rural and urban respondents in the study area. It is observed that out of the total rural area households 52.6 percent have individual water facility, 49.8 percent have electricity facility, 49.1 percent have television facility, 57.1 percent have fridge facility, 58.5 percent have 2 wheeler facility and 65.9 percent have 4 wheeler facilities, On the other hand from urban area households 45.4 percent have individual water facility, 39.3 percent have electricity facility, 51.0 percent have television facility, 59.7 percent have fridge facility, 59.2 percent have 2 wheeler facility and 55.1 percent have 4 wheeler facilities.

Table-3: Satisfaction levels of the tribal women about their social and economical aspects that make them strong and independent

Social and economical aspects	Highly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Not satisfied	Total
Education facilities	115 (40.1)	95 (33.1)	77 (26.8)	287 (100.0)
Employment opportunities	95 (33.1)	104 (36.2)	88 (30.7)	287 (100.0)
Equal status with men	69 (24.0)	90 (31.4)	128 (44.6)	287 (100.0)
Independence in decision making	90 (31.4)	115 (40.1)	82 (28.6)	287 (100.0)
Sharing burden of household activities	122 (42.5)	99 (34.5)	66 (23.0)	287 (100.0)
Social status	84 (29.3)	100 (34.8)	103 (35.9)	287 (100.0)
Economic status	86 (30.0)	125 (43.5)	76 (26.5)	287 (100.0)
Health status	130 (45.3)	98 (34.1)	59 (20.6)	287 (100.0)
Political participation	71 (24.7)	91 (31.7)	125 (43.5)	287 (100.0)
Life security	53 (18.5)	115 (40.1)	119 (41.5)	287 (100.0)

The Table-3 represents the satisfaction levels of the tribal women about their social and economical aspects that make them strong and independent. Out of total respondents 40.1 percent are highly satisfied about educational facilities followed by 33.1 percent are moderately satisfied and 26.8 percent are not satisfied. It is noticed that a predominated group of 36.2 percent are moderately satisfied followed by 33.1 percent are highly satisfied and 30.7 percent are not satisfied about employment opportunities. The data shows that 44.6 percent of respondents opined that they are not satisfied with their equal status with men, 31.4 percent opined that they are moderately satisfied and 24.0 percent opined that they are highly satisfied. It is observed that as many as 40.1 percent are moderately satisfied, 31.4 percent are highly satisfied and 28.6 percent are not satisfied about independence in decision making. From the data a dominated group of 42.5 percent of respondents said that they are highly satisfied in sharing burden of household activities followed by 34.5 percent said that they are moderately satisfied and 23.0 percent said that they are not satisfied.

The data reveals that majority of 35.9 percent are not satisfied followed by 34.8 percent are moderately satisfied and least 29.3 percent are highly satisfied with their social status. It is noticed that 43.5 percent are moderately satisfied, 30.0 percent are highly satisfied and 26.5 percent are not satisfied with the economical status. It is observed that predominated group of 45.3 percent are highly satisfied followed by 34.1 percent are moderately satisfied and 20.6 percent are not satisfied about their health status. It is found that 43.5 percent are not satisfied, 24.7 percent are highly satisfied and 24.7 percent are highly satisfied with political participation. The data shows that majority of 41.5 percent are not satisfied followed by 40.1 percent are moderately satisfied and least number of 18.5 percent are highly satisfied about their life security.

Regression Analysis

In regression the researcher estimated a model taking empowerment of tribal women in Visakhapatnam District as taken dependent variable, where total empowerment has measured by index of various parameters have taken as dependent variable and other relative variables are taken as independent variables. Those independent variables are like age, education, religion, vocational training, occupation, family type, family size, number of dependents, living house, basic amenities in the house, social status, economic status (income), health status and political awareness and participation.

Total number of respondents in the selected area (N=483)

Empowerment of tribal women: $Y = a + x_1b_1 + x_2b_2 + x_3b_3 + x_4b_4 + x_5b_5 + \dots$ Model

Multiple Regression Model

$Y = a + x_1b_1 + x_2b_2 + x_3b_3 + x_4b_4 + x_5b_5 + \dots$

Dependent Variable: Y = Empowerment of tribal women

Independent Variables:

$x_1 \rightarrow$ Age – Quantitative Variable, actual age of the respondents has considered

$x_2 \rightarrow$ Religion – Dummy variable (1-Hindus, 0-Others)

$x_3 \rightarrow$ Educational Status – Rank variable, where illiterates ranked as 0, primary as 1, secondary as 2 so on and finally post graduates have given rank with 5

- x_4 → Vocational Training – Dummy Variable (1-Trained, 0-Untrained)
 x_5 → Occupation – Rank variable, where housewife ranked as 0, labour as 1, self-employee as 2, business as 3, private employee as 4 and government employee as 5
 x_6 → Family type – Dummy variable (Nuclear – 0, Joint and Extent – 1)
 x_7 → Family size – Quantitative variable measured by number of family members in a house
 x_8 → Dependence ratio – Quantitative variable measured by actual number of dependents in the house
 x_9 → Dwelling house – Quantitative variable, where number of rooms in the house has considered
 x_{10} → Amenities in the house – Index variable, where number of facilities in the house are considered
 x_{11} → Social Status – Index variable, where it measured by the importance of respondent in different areas and fields in the society are considered
 x_{12} → Economic Status – Quantitative variable measured by actual income of the respondent
 x_{13} → Individual Property – Quantitative variable, total property possessed by the respondent in her own individual name
 x_{14} → Health Status – Dummy Variable (1-No health problems, 0-Health problems)
 x_{15} → Political status – Index variable, considered by political awareness and participation

Table-4: Empowerment of Scheduled Tribe Women in Visakhapatnam District

Regression Summary for Dependent Variable: Empowerment						
R= .99054769 R²= .98118473 Adjusted R²= .98014330						
F(15,271)=942.15 p<0.0000 Std. Error of estimate: .40657						
	Beta	St. Err. of Beta	B	St. Err. of B	t(271)	p-level
Intercept			1.274	0.380	3.349	0.001
1. Age	0.017	0.009	0.061	0.031	1.969*	0.045
2. Religion	0.000	0.008	0.003	0.051	0.056	0.955
3. Education	0.296	0.031	0.649	0.068	9.566**	0.000
4. Vocational Training	0.037	0.009	0.241	0.057	4.243**	0.000
5. Occupation	0.238	0.028	0.363	0.043	8.521**	0.000
6. Family Type	0.000	0.009	0.001	0.052	0.011	0.991
7. Family Size	-0.019	0.009	-0.076	0.038	-1.996*	0.047
8. Dependence ratio	-0.016	0.018	-0.046	0.052	-0.893	0.372
9. Dwelling house	0.028	0.018	0.082	0.052	1.576	0.116
10. Amenities in house	0.261	0.039	0.413	0.062	6.664**	0.000
11. Social Status	0.042	0.048	0.059	0.067	0.884	0.377
12. Economic Status	0.132	0.024	0.165	0.030	5.433**	0.000
13. Individual Property	0.074	0.016	0.114	0.025	4.511**	0.000
14. Health Status	0.024	0.009	0.045	0.018	2.566*	0.011
15. Politics status	0.014	0.009	0.042	0.027	1.571	0.117

*significant@1%level, **significant@5%level

Age is a quantitative variable estimated by number year is expected to be a significant relation with empowerment of the tribal women. In the regression analysis it is found significant at 5% level because the t-value is 1.969 and the p-value is 0.045. This can be inferred that the higher age group tribal women are empowered than the lesser age group women. This may be due to their experience in various economic and social activities.

Religion is a dummy variable and specifies the religious status of the respondent. It takes value 1 for Hindus and 0 for other religion respondents. It is found that there is no impact of religion of the respondents on their empowerment where the t-value 0.056 is not significant because the p-value is 0.955. This shows that there is no significant difference between Hindu and other religious groups in their empowerment.

Educational status is a variable which has estimated by ranks on their literacy levels. Here illiterates ranked as 0, primary ranked as 1, secondary ranked as 2, intermediate ranked as 3, graduates ranked as 4 and finally post graduates have given rank with 5. The literacy level is expected to have a positive significant relation with empowerment of tribal women. Here the regression coefficient of t-value 9.566 indicates significant at 1% level because the p-value is 0.00. Hence it is expected that the empowerment of tribal women is more where the literacy levels are high and vice-versa.

Vocational training is a dummy variable and specifies the vocational training undergone by the respondents. It takes value 1 for trained women and 0 for untrained women. It is expected to have a positive relation at empowerment and indicate 1% significant, where the t-value 4.243 and p-value 0.00. This infers that the tribal woman who has undergone vocational training is more empowered than untrained tribal women.

Occupational status is a rank variable, where housewife ranked as 0, labour ranked as 1, self-employee ranked as 2, business woman ranked as 3, private employee ranked as 4 and government employee ranked as 5. It is expected to have a positive relation of empowerment with their occupational status, where high ranked occupational group women are having more empowered than lesser ranked occupational groups. Here the regression coefficient of t-value 8.521 is significant at 1% level because the p-value is 0.00.

Family type is a dummy variable which infers the type of family where the respondent is living. Here the joint family or extended family valued with 1 and nuclear family valued with 0. From the above table it shows that the type of family does not influence the empowerment of the tribal women because the t-value is 0.011 and the p-value is 0.991.

Family size which represents number of family members living in the household of the respondent. Here the regression coefficient of t-value indicates negative significance with -1.996 and the p-value is 0.047. In this case the empowerment of tribal women show that more in family size leads to less empowering because the tribal women has to bare more responsibilities by undertaking the entire family.

Dependence ratio is a quantitative variable measured by number of dependents in the family. It is expected to have a negative relation with empowerment of tribal women, but here it does not indicate any significance because the co-efficient of t-value is -0.893 and the p-value is 0.372.

Dwelling house is a quantitative variable where number of rooms in the house has considered. It is expected to have a relation with empowerment of tribal women, but here it does not indicate any significance because the co-efficient of t-value is 1.576 and the p-value is 0.116.

Amenities in the house is an index variable, where number of facilities in the house are considered. Here the basic amenities in the house are expected to be positive relation with women empowerment. In the above regression table the co-efficient of t-value 6.664 is indicate significant at 1% level because the p-value is 0.00. It shows that more in number of facilities in the house indicate the women with more empowerment. This is because the more empowerment of women leads to more strength in economical status which contributes for more facilities in the house. Hence, the results in this study showed the more amenities in the house indicate the more empowerment of tribal women.

Social Status is a quantitative variable, measured by position and power of tribal women enjoyed by the tribal women in the society and house. It is expected to have a positive significant relation with empowerment. The regression coefficient of t-value is 0.884 which is not found significant at any level because p-value is 0.377. This infers that social status in the rural areas of the tribal women has a less influences on their empowerment.

Economic status refers to the quantitative variable measured by actual monthly earnings of the respondent. This variable is expected to be a significant relation with empowerment of tribal women where the regression coefficient of t-value 5.433 indicates significant at 1% level because the p-value is 0.00. This infers the more monthly earnings of tribal women indicate more empowerment and on the other hand it can be said that the income of the tribal women has influenced by empowerment.

Individual property refers to the quantitative variable measured by value of total property possessed by the respondent in her own name. This variable is expected to be a significant relation with empowerment of tribal women where the regression coefficient of t-value 4.511 indicates significant at 1% level because the p-value is 0.00. This infers the more individual property possessed by the tribal women leads to more empowerment.

Health Status is a dummy variable, where the respondent with no health problems rated with 1 and the respondent possessing health problems rated with 0. The health status of the respondent is expected to have a positive relation in empowerment. Here in this study it is found that the t-value 2.566 is significant at 1% level because the p-value is 0.00. This infers that the health status of the tribal women influences on their empowerment, where healthy women are having more empowerment than ill healthy women.

Political status is an Index variable, considered by political awareness and political participation of the tribal women. This variable is expected to have a positive relation with empowerment, where it shows the regression co-efficient of t-value is 1.571 is indicate not significant because the p-value is 0.117. This infers that there is no significant relation between empowerment of tribal women and their political status.

In this model the linear multiple regressions has been applied. This model is also the best fit to measure the influence of social, economical and demographic variables of tribal women on their empowerment. This is because the F value in this regression is 942.15 which is satisfactorily significant at 1% Level. The model also explains R² at 98.01% of variation. In this model of regression analysis out of the total 15 explanatory variables as many as 8 variables are found to be significant, where one variable i.e. family size is negative. These variables are Education, Vocational Training, Occupation, Amenities in house, Economic Status, Individual Properties and Health Status of tribal women which are indicate significant at 1% level and 5% level. But the variables like Religion, Family type, Dependence ratio, Dwelling house, Social status and Political status are not significant.

Conclusion

The development of women in general and tribal women in particular to empower them has been the centre stage of various developments planning both at the central as well as state levels in India. It is opined that in general the political and economic conditions of tribal women is more depressed and neglected than that of non tribal counterpart. Andhra Pradesh is the traditional home of nearly 33 tribal groups and most of these communities are found inhabiting in the border areas of Andhra Pradesh, especially in the North and North-East, and highest Scheduled Tribe population is found in Khammam and Visakhapatnam districts. The state has taken up a number of policies to promote, preserve and strengthen the economic and political empowerment of tribal women. Economic empowerment of tribal women is an essential issue of tribal development. The major findings of this paper based on data analysis discussed above, the different aspects like age, religion, education, vocational training, occupation, family type, family size, dependence ratio, dwelling house, amenities in house, social status, economic status, individual property, health status and politics status concerning the lives of tribal women, which are determining their empowerment. Among these education,

vocational training, occupation, amenities in house, economic status, individual properties and health status of tribal women impact more on empowerment of tribal women. Therefore, special attention need to be paid to provide better education and health care, which will lead to improvement of women's physical health and economic status. Awareness about the value of education which will lead to improvement of literacy rates among women as also retention of girl children in schools. Tribal women role in decision making in the political area should also be strengthened. Research on tribal women issues should be based on empirical data which will lead to a proper perspective of women's issues and arrive at some practical solutions.

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