

The Problems of Elderly Tribal Women in Kodaikanal Hills: A Sociological Perspective

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I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The elderly Paliyan tribes are illiterate and highly ignorant and gullible. They are ignorant as well as unaware of the day-to-day happenings not being assertive enough to grasp the opportunities that are offered by the Government. They continue to cling to their domicile and maintain the pattern of life sticking to the age-old customs. They evade assimilation and joining the mainstream of society. The lack confidence and they have competitive spirit. The occupations they engaged in are seasonal and fetch meagre income. They are not in a position to provide education to their children and are not able to avail of better medical facilities. They have to labour day and night to earn their daily bread.

A scientific method of study is necessary to gain knowledge of the problem of a study. In order to make the present study a scientific one the researcher followed certain research procedures. The present study is an attempt to analyse what are the problems existing among the elderly tribal women and how the attitudes of the member of the society affect the elderly women. The appropriate research methodology has been adopted for this study intends to explain the problems of elderly tribal women in Kodaikanal hills at Dindigul District.

II. PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the socio-economic background of the elderly tribal women.
2. To assess the level of awareness of Government schemes for tribals.
3. To examine factors and extent of problems found among the respondents.
4. To evaluate the role of supporting system for the welfare of the respondents.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive research design has been adopted for this study. The purpose of this research design is to describe the problems and other units under investigation like socio-economic background of the respondents, and elicit new information about the elderly tribal women in the study area through the above objectives.

IV. AREA OF THE STUDY

Based on the data available with the Government regarding the numerical concentration of the Paliyan tribals in Tamilnadu, a Kodaikanal hill was selected for the present study.

Table - 1
Schedule Tribes Population

S.No	Region	Schedule Tribes		Total
		Male	Female	
1.	India	40,69,232	40,13,283	8,082,515
2.	Tamil Nadu	3,22,404	3,28,917	6,51,321
3.	Dindigul District	3,320	3,164	6,484
4	Kodaikanal Taluk	1,025	989	2,014

V. SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS: PROCEDURE

Sampling involves the selection of a few items from the particular group to be studied with a view to obtaining relevant data that help draw conclusions regarding the entire group. Based on the objectives of the study an Interview schedule had been prepared to elicit the facts and details from the respondents selected for the purpose of the study. The total number of tribal population in Dindigul District is 6,484. The total number of tribal population in Kodaikanal Hills/Taluk among the 15 Panchayats, One Town Panchayat and one Municipality is 2,014, among the total population 1,025 male and 989 female respectively. There are 780 elderly (above 60 years old) tribals in Kodaikanal hills, from the total women elderly people (989), 10 per cent of the (98.9 arrived as 100) respondents were selected by simple random sampling through lottery method.

VI. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION

For the collection of primary data from the selected elderly tribals women in Kodaikanal Taluk, structured interview schedule was used. It was designed so as to cover the socio-economic background of the elderly tribes, assess the level of awareness of Government schemes for tribals, problems found among the respondents and role of supporting system for the welfare of the respondents. Observation method was also employed as a tool for data collection.

VII. DATA PROCESSING AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected by using the structured interview were edited and codified. The data were processed using SPSS. The simple percentage frequency tables were drawn. The data were correlated and crossed with the variables, etc. the tables were interpreted. The observations made during data collections were helpful to interpret the data.

VIII. MAJOR FINDING OF THE STUDY

Data were collected from 100 respondents from Adukkam, Kilakuchettipatti, Vaadadounchi, Thandikudi, Poolathur, Kookal and Kamanur village panchayats in Kodaikanal taluk. Study of the elderly tribal women must take into account a number of factors such as demographic, economic and social which describe the physical as well as the socio – psychological.

Age is an important demographic trend of a respondent. The role of age is an individual in performance in socio and economic problems. Age group is one of the most influential segments in the society. Here age groups classified by equal interval of the five years basis.

- Regarding age wise classification of respondents a good number (31.8 per cent) of them belonged to the age group between 60-64 years. And 2.6 per cent of them were above 80 years old.
- When the educational status of the elderly respondents was analysed, it was found that there were more of illiterate (91.2 per cent), and a few of the (8.8 per cent) respondents completed only primary level education. It is observed that most of the respondents were uneducated due to non-availability of school in the study area for the past few decades.
- Marital status revealed that out of 390 respondents a vast majority of them (53.6 per cent) were married and living with their spouse. 24.9 per cent of the respondents come under the widow category.
- A vast majority (47.4 per cent) of the married respondents come under the age group of 60-64, 44 per cent belong to 65-69 age group. 56.7 per cent of the respondents from widow category were belonging to 70-74 age groups.
- It found that 78.5 per cent tribal people living in huts or Thatched house at interior forest area, 18.7 per cent of the respondents residing at Pucca house these types of houses are made up of sand, stone, wood and leaf, and remaining 2.8 per cent of the respondents are living in concrete house.
- It is found from the study that majority of the respondents depend mainly on agriculture (42.7 per cent) and also depend on agricultural coolie works for livelihood. They belong to the age group of 60-64.
- The income of the respondents highlighted that high number (39.7 per cent) of the respondents were earning Rs. 1001 to 2000 per month.
- It is observed that 31.9 per cent of the respondents get financial support from their daughters. 12.1 per cent of the respondents are getting financial support from their spouse and remaining 11.7 per cent of the respondents

are receiving from their sons. The inference drawn from the analysis is that female children were taking care of their parents during illness in the lost stage of elderly tribes.

- When assessed the level of awareness of supportive systems and welfare of the elderly tribal people, the majority (58.2 per cent) of them responded that they did not know about the Government programmes. It is observed that the elderly people are not well aware of Government tribal welfare programmes due to ignorance and illiteracy.
- Level of awareness about tribal welfare policies fall into three major divisions. They are high, Medium and Low. 58.2 per cent of the respondents came under the low level of awareness, 25.1 per cent of the respondents have the medium level of awareness and remaining 16.7 per cent of the respondents have much knowledge about the tribal welfare policies.
- The age groups of the respondents were divided into five categories that is 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79 and above 80. It is clear that the respondents from 60-64 are more aware than others for instance.

Based on the objective ‘factors and extent of problems among the elderly tribal women’s’ the researcher finds factors and major problems of elderly tribal women in respect of their age, sex, dependency ratio, etc. and the conditions of the aged in respect of their economic dependency, number of dependants, living arrangements, persons supporting the aged, physical immobility, etc. The results obtained from the research are presented in this section.

- It is observed from the field that 85.9 per cent of the respondents have some kind of Physical problems like gastro intestinal disease, chronic constipation, chronic headache, joint pain, loss of vision, loss of hearing. These problems occurred due to food habits, climate condition and ageing factor. Malnutrition, as expected, is the most common health problem among the tribals. In addition, they from communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria. Some tribal groups are also at high risk for sickle cell anemia. Generally tribal diets are seen to be deficient in protein, iron, iodine, and vitamins.
- In this modern medicine era, 45.1 per cent of the respondents are following sidha medicine for their physical illness like, fever, cold, jaundice and other problems from primitive period.
- 59.1 per cent of the agricultural coolie workers have the physical problems. 61.8 per cent of the agricultural coolie workers have economic problems. And 60 per cent of the agricultural coolie workers have psychological problems. These three major problems affect the agricultural coolies only. Because they were getting very low income, they cannot consume healthy food, and they do not get proper respect from the society.
- Regarding visual or eye sight problems 38.2 per cent of the respondents have visual problems. They lost their visions by Retinal detachment, Diabetic retinopathy,

senile muscular degeneration, Retinal defects, Excessive dryness, Excessive tears, Glaucoma, Cataract.

- Analysis of the care givers to the respondents 23.3 per cent of them stated that they get only minimum care from family members 2.6 per cent of the respondents are living singly.
- It is observed that half (50 per cent) of the respondents feel uncomfortable with their family members regarding respect and love. In addition to loss of respect, 35.4 per cent were not having food along with family members. And 21 per cent of respondents stated that 'no-income' is problem for loss of their respect in the family.
- Psychological problem is most common among elderly. Loneliness in old age is a common problem found in many of the developed and developing countries. Some old persons who are practically alone because they remained single after death of spouse (or) were widowed early and do not have any son or a daughter. But children are also thinking that the aged parents are a burden to them and treated as unwanted one. 13.3 per cent of the respondents stated that they have the feeling of isolation.

Both Central and State Governments have implemented new welfare programmes for old age people to improve their socio economic status and health conditions. Aged people are affected by economical support and meager health condition, because of inability to earn money, unaware of health conditions.

Central assistance to provide old age pension to the elderly is available to a destitute in the sense that he/she has no regular means of subsistence for his/her own source of income or through financial support from family members or other sources. The amount of old-age pension difference from State to State. The scheme is implemented in the state and union territories through panchayats and municipalities.

But, there is no separate welfare scheme for the Paliyan tribes in particular and the age of other tribes in general launched by the Government. In these circumstances the role of voluntary organization is the only means for the welfare of these people. There are two types of welfare facilities received by the respondents from Central and State Governments. These are one from tribal welfare department and another one from old age scheme like old age pension scheme, Annapoorna scheme etc...

- Level of awareness about old age welfare schemes exposed that the out of 100 respondents majority (68.2 per cent) of the respondents are aware of the old age welfare schemes. 31.8 per cent of the respondents opined that they have not known about the old age welfare schemes.
- Awareness about old age welfare schemes like, National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), 93.6 per cent of the respondents have the awareness about it, only 6.4 per cent of the respondents' unaware about this scheme. 92 per cent of the respondents were unaware of The Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS). 56.4 per cent of the respondents were unaware about destitute widow pension scheme. 83.6 per cent of the respondents were ignorant about Annapoorna Scheme. 72.3 per cent of the respondents

were unaware of Integrated Programmes for Older Persons scheme.

- The inference drawn from the analysis is that 19.2 per cent of the respondents opined that they faced some problems to get old age pension.
- Respondents faced problems while they didn't get pension. 11.5 per cent of the respondents were having problems in getting the pension due to rigid rules or no supporters. 3.5 per cent of the respondents cannot get old age pension due to physical illness.
- Next to physical problems 2.1 per cent of the respondents faced problems due to non-cooperation of Government officials like, Village Administrative Officers, Headship of the village, Presidents and etc.,

IX. CONCLUSION

Having studied the problems of elderly tribal women in the hill areas of Kodaikanal in Dindigul district, South Tamilnadu it is found out from the in-depth analysis of the problems and its extent faced by the elders revealed that tribal elders under study are more prone to be affected by physical, economical and psychological problems. Taking into account the nature of geographical location of the target and way of life, sources of livelihood have forced the poor elders to lead miserable life in the rest of their lives. As there is no alternative employment and their increasing age factors have become instrumental behind perpetuating their poor economic life.

Problems of the aged anywhere is unavoidable. It is nature's course of action; some problems can be solved with utilization of medical advancement and increasing economic position. But, the life of elders in hill area and their ever increasing problems remain the same despite taking steps to alleviate them.

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