



PERSONAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRIBAL FARMERS

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ABSTRACT

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The research study was conducted to study the personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of the tribal farmers of High Altitude Tribal Zone of Karnataka state. The study revealed that majority of the respondents were in middle age, illiterates, marginal farmers, had medium farming experience, medium level of annual income, majority were having nuclear family with four to five family members and medium level of extension contact, mass media exposure, social participation, economic orientation, risk orientation and level of aspiration with high fatalism.

KEYWORDS: Characteristics, Tribal Farmers

INTRODUCTION

Tribal people are children of nature and their lifestyle is conditioned by the ecosystem. They have followed ways of life for many generations that are largely self-sufficient and are clearly different from the mainstream and dominant society. There are approximately 200 million tribal people in the entire globe accounting for about 4 per cent of the global population. With more than 84.4 million constituting 8.6 per cent of the total population, India has the largest population of the tribal people in the world and the government has identified more than 697 tribal communities in the country. Tribal communities live in about 15 per cent of the country's area, in various ecological and geo climatic conditions ranging from plains, forests, hills and inaccessible areas.

The regular and continues research in analyzing the personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of the tribal farmers is having paramount importance to design the strategies for improving the livelihood security of the tribal farmers. Hence the present study was taken up with the objective of analyzing the personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of the tribal farmers of High Altitude Tribal Zone of Karnataka state.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Ex post facto research design was followed for the study. The Chamaraja Nagara district was purposively

selected since it is having highest number of tribal farmers in Karnataka state. All the four ranges viz., Yelandur, Kollegal, Chamaraja Nagara and Punjur of High Altitude Tribal Zone located in Biligiri Rangana hills (B R Hills) of Chamaraja Nagara district were selected for the study. Two villages from each range were selected by following simple random sampling procedure, thus making a total of eight villages for the study. From each of the eight selected villages, 15 respondents were selected by following simple random sampling procedure, thus making a total of 120 respondents. Fourteen independent variables of tribal farmers were selected for the study. The data were collected by personal interview method through a structured interview schedule and analyzed by employing suitable statistical methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tribal farmers were distributed into different categories based on their selected personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics and are presented in the Table-1.

Age

More than two fifth (41.67%) of the tribal farmers belonged to middle age category followed by old age (35.83%) and young age (22.50%) categories. The probable reason for the above trend might be due to the reason that, the old age and middle age tribal farmers might be continuing their life in the tribal environment

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by taking different tribal livelihood options. On the other side the young generation might have undergone higher education and moved to plains for employment and other occupational avenues. The findings of the present study were similar with the studies of Tudu *et al.* (2013), Mareeswaran (2014), Prajapati *et al.* (2015).

Education

Nearly half (47.50%) of the tribal farmers were illiterates, 22.50 per cent of them acquired primary school education, 17.50 per cent were functionally illiterate, 6.67 per cent falls under middle school, 4.17 per cent respondents had high school education and only 1.67 per cent respondents had intermediate education. The possible twin reasons for above trend may be due to lack of awareness on importance of education among the tribal farmers and forced involvement towards earning for their livelihood. The establishment of primary education institutions in tribal areas, the intensive educational campaigns and other adult educational programs might have resulted in functional literacy and primary school education among the tribal farmers. The results were in line with findings of Dhanasree *et al.* (2014), Mareeswaran (2014) and Prajapati *et al.* (2015).

Farming experience

Three fifth (64.17%) of the tribal farmers had medium farming experience followed by low (21.67%) and high farming experience (14.16%). As agriculture is one of the ancient livelihood options for tribals, the old age tribals might be continuing agriculture from generation to generation. Previously the tribal farmers might have depended purely on forest based livelihood activities. Due to restrictions by the forest department on these forest based activities, the tribal farmers might have shifted to agriculture and allied farm activities. On the other side young tribal farmers might have put up less farming experience due to their education and span of farming. Hence the above trend might have been observed. The results were in confirmation with the findings reported by Swathi (2012) and Senthil (2013).

Farm size

More than four fifth (84.17%) of the tribal farmers were marginal farmers followed by small farmers (15.83%) and there were no big farmers. The basic orientation of the tribal farmer is towards livelihood rather than commercialization. Hence all the tribal farmers might be taking agriculture on a limited scale mostly for their

food requirement. On the other side, land restrictions by the forest department over tribal farmers and land encroachment by landlords and estate owners in the regions of tribal zones also might have resulted in the small holdings and majority of tribal farmers remain as marginal farmers. The studies of Kiran (2011) and Barman *et al.* (2013) supported the present results.

Annual Income

Three fourth (75.00%) of the tribal farmers had medium income level followed by low level of income (15.83%) and only 9.17 per cent respondents had high income level. The probable reason for the above trend is that the tribal people might be living under resource poor conditions with limited access to urban culture. They might be satisfied with their present standard of living which may be far away from the people in plains. Due to the illiteracy and lack of awareness on the tribal developmental programs, they might have not been able to identify the sources of getting high income. A very meager amount of tribal farmers who were local leaders and relatively resource rich farmers might be under high income category. The findings of the study were in conformity with the studies of Malik (2010).

Family type

Most (89.17%) of the tribal farmers were in nuclear family followed by joint family (10.83%). The possible reason for the above trend might be even in tribal areas the importance for money, individual differences and priorities might have triggered towards the culture of nuclear approach. Very few tribal families might be leading their life together due to the dependence of old age parents and established relationship. The findings of the present study were similar to that of Swati (2007), Antara *et al.* (2009), Rao (2010).

Family size

Nearly half (49.17%) of the tribal farmers had medium family size followed by (35.83%) of them had small family size and (15.00%) of them had big family size. It is a clear indication that the tribal farmers were well aware about the family planning and wish to have a small family to be a happy family. The locally established NGO's might have created a great impact on the importance of family planning. More traditional and highly orthodox families might be under high family size category. Similar findings were communicated in the studies of Barman *et al.* (2013), Marbaniang *et al.* (2013), Tudu *et al.* (2013), Mareeswaran (2014).

Extension contact

About 52.50 per cent of the respondents were having medium extension contact followed by low (25.00%) and high (22.50%) extension contact. The probable reason for above trend might be that, there are ample extension agencies from Government department, NGO's and cooperative societies who are intensively targeting the limited geographical areas of tribal zones for the welfare of the tribals. The variation might be in terms of extent of participation and utilization of extension services by the tribal farmers. Kiran (2011), Swathi (2012) and Dhanasree *et al.* (2014) also expressed similar results in their studies.

Mass media exposure

About 62.50 per cent of the respondents were having medium mass media exposure followed by low (20.83%) and high (16.67%) levels of mass media exposure. The advancement of information and communication technologies even reached tribal peripheries. The modern electronic gadgets like radio, television, and mobile were in use in tribal areas. The differences in standard of living, level of education, remoteness of the village might have shown the difference in possession and utilization of different mass media sources. But the print media usage was almost nil in the tribal areas. The research findings were in correspondence with the studies of Rathod (2007) and Devarajaiah (2010).

Social participation

About 60.83 per cent of the respondents had medium level of social participation followed by high (21.76%) and low (17.50%) social participation levels. The tribal farmers might be leading their life with more dependence on the environment and its associated members. During the course of action, they might be trying to associate with the members of such organization or agencies as members or representatives to realize the benefits of their welfare programs. On the other side the ignorant and innocent tribal people might have retained as non-members of such programs. Devarajaiah (2010) reported similar results.

Economic orientation

Nearly two third (64.17%) of the tribal farmers had medium level of economic orientation, followed by low (25.83%) and high (10.00%) levels of economic orientation. Economy is the core component of survival, existence and development of any human being. No

exception, it is also a major component for tribal life but the orientation might be towards survival and existence than development. Due to their limited income and limited vision towards their future life, they might be relatively less oriented towards their economy. The variation in this direction among tribals might be due to changes in their education, level of living and other situational variables. Marbaniang (2010) and Kiran (2011) also expressed similar results in their studies.

Risk orientation

Above half (52.50%) of the tribal farmers had medium level of risk orientation, followed by low (26.67%) and high (20.83%) levels of risk orientation. In any situation, the risk is a part of life. But the degree of variation depends on the nature of activity and its way of handling by an individual. The tribals might be in the condition of survival of the fittest, forced to handle and acclimatize with the risk to meet the challenge of feeding their family members. Accordingly they might be experiencing varying degrees of risks to achieve their goal. Similar findings were explored by Narayani (2009).

Level of aspiration

More than two third (66.67%) of tribal farmers had medium level of aspiration followed by low (21.67%) and high (11.66%) level of aspiration. Aspiration brings the sense of hard work. As the tribal farmers work for their livelihood, they might be inspired to take up their activities with determination. The degree of determination might be influenced through their level of aspiration which was accrued as a part of their lifetime. So the degree of variation in their aspiration might be attributed to their need for achievement and extent of hard work. The findings of Kumari (2008) were in line with the present study.

Fatalism

Nearly half (48.34%) of the respondents had high fatalism followed by medium (38.33%) and low (13.33%) of fatalism. The notion of "Nothing is in the hands of human beings" is more predominant in tribal areas. Even though they desired to achieve something in their life, they might be leaving everything to god and luck without any assured output. The major reason for this trend might be the uncontrolled and unexpected events in the tribal environment. The research work done by Bindu (2001) and Kumari (2008) also supported the present study.

Characteristics of the tribal farmers

Table 1. Personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of tribal farmers

					(n= 120)
S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
AGE					
1.	Young (<35 Years)	27	22.50	-	-
2.	Middle(36-55 Years)	50	41.67		
3.	Old (>56 years)	43	35.83		
	Total	120	100.00		
EDUCATION					
1	Illiterate	57	47.50	-	-
2.	Can read and write	21	17.50		
3.	Primary school	27	22.50		
4.	Middle school	8	6.67		
5.	High school	5	4.17		
6.	Intermediate	2	1.67		
7.	Degree & above	0	0.00		
	Total	120	100.00		
FARMING EXPERIENCE					
1.	Low	26	21.67	23.95	12.26
2.	Medium	77	64.17		
3.	High	17	14.16		
	Total	120	100.00		
FARM SIZE					
1.	Marginal farmer	101	84.17	-	-
2.	Small farmer	19	15.83		
3.	Big farmer	0	0.00		
	Total	120	100.00		
ANNUAL INCOME					
1.	Low	19	15.83	27395.83	20233.81
2.	Medium	90	75.00		
3.	High	11	9.17		
	Total	120	100.00		
FAMILY TYPE					
1.	Nuclear	107	89.17	-	-
2.	Joint	13	10.83		
	Total	120	100.00		
FAMILY SIZE					
1.	Small	43	35.83	4.13	1.33
2.	Medium	59	49.17		
3.	Big	18	15.00		
	Total	120	100.00		

Cont...

Table 1. Contd...

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D.
EXTENSION CONTACT					
1.	Low	30	25.00	7.18	2.65
2.	Medium	63	52.50		
3.	High	27	22.50		
	Total	120	100.00		
MASS MEDIA EXPOSURE					
1.	Low	25	20.83	3.79	2.30
2.	Medium	75	62.50		
3.	High	20	16.67		
	Total	120	100.00		
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION					
1.	Low	21	17.50	7.08	2.79
2.	Medium	73	60.83		
3.	High	26	21.67		
	Total	120	100.00		
ECONOMIC ORIENTATION					
1.	Low	12	10.00	13.52	1.72
2.	Medium	77	64.17		
3.	High	31	25.83		
	Total	120	100.00		
RISK ORIENTATION					
1.	Low	32	26.67	11.78	2.10
2.	Medium	63	52.50		
3.	High	25	20.83		
	Total	120	100.00		
LEVEL OF ASPIRATION					
1.	Low	26	21.67	7.98	2.59
2.	Medium	80	66.67		
3.	High	14	11.66		
	Total	120	100.00		
FATALISM					
1.	Low	16	13.33	7.90	1.25
2.	Medium	46	38.33		
3.	High	58	48.34		
	Total	120	100.00		

CONCLUSION

Majority of the tribal farmers were in middle age, illiterates, marginal farmers, had medium farming experience, medium level of annual income, majority were having nuclear family with four to five family members and medium level of extension contact, mass media exposure, social participation, economic orientation, risk orientation and level of aspiration with high fatalism. This signifies the need for providing proper hand holding support for the tribal farmers in terms of functional literacy programmes, awareness on importance of extension personnel and mass media for their development. They also need to enrich in the area of psychological development which is the pillar for success of any human being.

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