



PROFILE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIALLY BACKWARD FARMING COMMUNITY IN IDUKKI DISTRICT OF KERALA

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ABSTRACT

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The present investigation was carried out to study the profile characteristics of socially backward farming community in Idukki district of Kerala. *Ex-post facto* research design was followed for the study and a sample of 120 socially backward respondents was drawn. The results of the study revealed that most of the respondents were middle aged (52.50%), middle school educated (35.00%), had marginal land holding (72.50%), belong to Scheduled Caste (50.00%) and Scheduled Tribes (50.00%), had medium income (85.83%), medium social participation (55.84%), medium mass media exposure (71.67%), medium aspiration level (70.00%), medium extension contact (63.33%), moderate decision making (62.50%), medium achievement motivation (62.50%) and medium level of management orientation (63.33%).

KEY WORDS: Profile characteristics, socially backward farmers, socio-economic upliftment

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the main base of Indian economy. The agriculture development is depending on development of all sectors of farming community may be poor or rich, educated or illiterate, forward or backward communities. Generally, we assume that Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Denotified Tribes (DTs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) as socially backward classes. As tribal villages are located in the forest and hills, and scheduled

are engaged in farming as major and supplementary occupation in the district, respectively. The present research paper focuses on the profile characteristics of socially backward farmers especially those who belong to Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes as the main area of research study. The analysis and identification of their strength and weakness would help in identifying the opportunities and possibilities of their socio-economic upliftment.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Ex-post-facto research design was used in the present investigation. Idukki district of Kerala was selected purposively. Three taluks *viz.*, Devikulam, Peerumedu and Udumbenchola of Idukki district were selected through simple random sampling procedure. From each selected taluks four villages were selected randomly and from each selected village, ten socially backward farmers were selected, making a total of 120 respondents for the study. The data were collected by personal interview method through structured interview schedule and analyzed by employing suitable statistical tools like Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, Frequencies and percentages were used.

Castes on isolated colonies they remain more or less cut off from the main stream of national development. Extension education is equally important in these communities as it is in the rural communities. It has widely been accepted by the Government that, these socially driven people must be brought the main stream of Indian life. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are exploited through and alienation, indebtedness, bounded labour, malpractices in exchange of agricultural and forest produce, *etc.* Idukki district have 13.1 per cent Scheduled Castes population and 5 per cent Scheduled Tribes population while the Kerala state averages were 9.2 and 1.45 per cent respectively for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population. Scheduled Castes (3.66% and 3.19%) and Scheduled Tribes (33.62% and 25.70%)

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profile characteristics studied in the study were age, education, land holding, social status, annual income, social participation, mass media exposure, aspiration level, extension contact, decision making ability, achievement motivation and management orientation.

1. Age:

It is clear from the Table 1 that, more than half of the socially backward farmers (52.50%) belong to middle age; followed by more than one third respondents (35.00%) belong to young (12.50%) age categories. The predominance of the middle aged group of the backward farming community might probably be due to the fact they constituted large section in the society. The probable reason for having minimal percentage of young age category might be the unwillingness of unemployed youth of Kerala to take up jobs in the farming sector which is perceived as a low status by the society and those finds farming as less attractive and unpromising than other occupation. Hence this kind of result might have appeared in the study where majority of socially backward farmers were middle aged followed by old aged and young age category. The findings were in conformity with Anitha and Karthikeyan (2015), Siddeswari (2015) and Singh *et al.* (2017).

2. Education:

It is evident from the Table 1 that, 35 per cent of the socially backward farmers were educated upto high school. followed by middle school (22.50 %), primary (15.84 %), illiterate (15.00 %), high school (5.83 %), functional literate (3.33 %) and graduate (2.50 %) education. No socially backward farmer was with post-graduation. It could be concluded from the above results that; majority of the respondents were educated upto high school level. Poor financial status, lack of awareness, interest in education and frequent dropouts resulted from the urge to secure assured Government and non-Government jobs on availing educational relaxation for the same might be the reasons for discontinuation of education at high school level.

3. Land holding:

It is clear from the Table 1 that, 72.50 per cent of the socially backward farmers were marginal farmers followed by 17.5 per cent small farmers and only 10 per cent big farmers. The possible reason for above trend might be the fragmentation of land due to increased nuclear family system as well as conversion of agricultural land into non-agricultural land? On the other side land holding is one of the major factors determining the utilization of various Government development initiatives. The studies of Khedkar and Dhakad (2014) and Ramya (2016) supported the present results.

4. Social Status

It is transparent from the Table 1 that, 50 per cent of the socially backward farmers belong to scheduled caste and remaining 50 per cent belong to scheduled tribe category. Among the various parameters determining the social status, caste was recognized as one of the most powerful tool. The sample of the study comprising both Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes in equal proportion, so as to derive meaningful conclusions about socially backward farmers.

5. Annual income

It is clearly evident from the Table 1 that, 85.83 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of annual income followed by low (13.33%) and high (0.84%) annual income levels. The probable reason for the above trend might be due to the fact that most of the farmers had less than 2.5 acres of land holding. The above results might be because of the reason that almost all the farmers were getting more or less same income from farming as majority of socially backward farmers operates in marginal land holding. Agricultural labour followed by agriculture and livestock contributed a major share in annual income of low and medium annual income farmers. This finding was in line with the results of Anitha and Karthikeyan (2015).

6. Social Participation

It is revealed from the Table 1 that, 55.84 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of social participation followed by low (28.33%) and high (15.83%) levels of social participation.

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The probable reason for the above trend might be due to the fact that majority of the socially backward farmers were small and marginal farmers with poor economic status, hence they tend to show hesitance in participating social events. Their social status might be another factor leading to disinclination towards participating in various social institutions. This finding was in conformity with the results of Suryawanshi (2002).

7. Mass media exposure

It is observed from the Table 1 that, 71.67 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of mass media exposure followed by high (17.50%) and low (10.83%) levels of mass media exposure. The possible reason for the above results might be that even though presence and easy access to a number of mass media exists, the socially backward farmers due to their isolation and less awareness they might be less exposed to mass media. On the other side, some educated socially backward farmers might be proactive in utilizing different mass media regularly. This result was in agreement with Siddeswari (2015).

8. Aspiration level

The findings presented in the Table 1 reveals that, 70 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of aspiration levels followed by high (17.50%) and low (12.50%) aspiration levels. Aspiration brings the sense of hard work. Being the resource poor farmers, they might be working for their livelihood and 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 pail of their day-today activities. So the degree of variation in their aspiration might be attributed to their need for achievement and extent of hard work. It was in conformity with Samwel (2000) and Naidu (2012).

9. Extension contact

The Table 1 clearly indicates that, 63.33 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of extension contact, followed by high (20.00%) and low (16.67%) levels of extension contact. The probable reason for above trend might be that, there are ample extension agencies viz., Government departments, NGO's and cooperative societies who are intensively targeting the limited geographical areas of these weakest section zones

for their welfare. The variation might be in terms of extent of participation and utilization of extension services by the socially backward farmers. Geographical isolation of these communities and previous negative encounters might be the reason that restrains them from the effective utilization of extension services. The findings were in line with Singh *et al.*, (2017).

10. Decision making ability

It is revealed from the Table 1 that, 62.5 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of decision making ability followed by low (20.00%) and high (17.50%) levels of decision making ability. Decision is a universal phenomenon. In every walk of life of any individual, the decisions play a significant role in realizing their goal. Being socially backward farming community, the farmers might be taking right decision at right time to sustain in their life. In contrary, low decision making ability could be the result of lack of comprehension and capability on the context concerned by the socially backward farmer. This was in conformity with Satyagopa l (2009), Pandey and De (2015) and Boruah *et al.*, (2015).

11. Achievement motivation

The Table 1 revealed that, 62.50 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of achievement motivation followed by low (22.50%) and high (15.00%) levels of achievement motivation. The probable reason for the above trend might be due to the fact that, the socially backward farmers might be striving hard for their livelihood and in due course of time they might be targeting their goals to meet the minimum family expenditure. This might have. Developed an urge to achieve something in their life. On the other side the low achievement motivation can be attributed to negative emotional behavior on the part of some of the poor socially backward farming community. Similar results were obtained for Satyagopal (2009) and Pandey and De (2015).

12. Management orientation

An overview of Table 1 indicated that, 63.33 per cent of the socially backward farmers had medium level of management orientation followed by low (20.00%) and high (16.66%) levels of management orientation. The above trend of the results might be due to the fact that, the agricultural scenario is changing from sustainability to

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commercialization, the farmers are oriented towards getting rather than higher productivity with their better managerial abilities. On the other side, the people with traditional ways of farming include laggards, illiterates; old people might be adopting the age old practices without proper resource management. The results are in line with findings of Himaja (2001) and Satyagopal (2009).

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that majority of the socially backward farmers were middle aged, middle school educated, with marginal land holding, constituting equal proportion from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, with medium- income, social participation, mass media exposure, aspiration level, extension contact, decision making ability, achievement motivation and management orientation. Hence, it is vital to focus on the personal and socio-psychological attributes of socially backward farmers while designing appropriate strategies for developmental schemes and initiatives, to strengthen the various attributes of socially backward farmers which in turn influence their socio-economic upliftment.

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Table 1 Distribution of respondents according to their profile characteristics (n=120)

S. No.	Variables	Category	Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Young	15	12.50
		old	63	52.50
		High	42	35.00
2	Education	Illiterate	18	15.00
		Functional literate	04	03.33
		Primary school	19	15.84
		Middle school	27	22.50
		High school	42	35.00
		Intermediate	07	05.83
		Graduation	03	02.50
		Post-graduation	0	00.00
3	Land holding	Marginal farmers	87	72.50
		Small farmers	21	17.50
		Big farmers	12	10.00
4	Social status	Scheduled Castes	60	50.00
		Scheduled Tribes	60	50.00
5	Annual income	Low	16	13.33
		Medium	103	85.83
		High	1	00.84
6	Social participation	Low	34	28.33
		Medium	67	55.84
		High	19	15.83
7	Mass media exposure	Low	21	17.50
		Medium	86	71.67
		High	13	10.83
8	Aspiration Level	Low	15	12.50
		Medium	84	70.00
		High	21	17.50
9	Extension contact	Low	20	16.67
		Medium	76	63.33
		High	24	20.00
10	Decision making ability	Low	24	20.00
		Medium	75	62.50
		High	21	17.50
11	Achievement motivation	Low	27	22.50
		Medium	75	62.50
		High	18	15.00
12	Management Orientation	Low	24	20.00
		Medium	76	63.33
		High	20	16.67