

Original Research Article

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Perception of Usefulness of Developmental Programmes by the Tribal Agricultural Labourers of Wayanad District: A Critical Gender Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This investigation has been done on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from primary sources and explored the differential perception of extent of usefulness of development programmes of the tribal agricultural labourers. The greatest number of respondents with high level of perception was observed in *Kurichiya* community. The *Paniya* community lie in between the *Kattunaikan* and *Kurichiya* community in their level of perception. The high level of perception is owed to their better mass media exposure, awareness about the developmental programmes and political orientation. Educational status, annual income, wage and level of self- confidence had a positive influence on perception. Political orientation plays a major role in giving a support to the tribal agricultural labourers to raise their voices against the inequalities and social evils, which help them to have a perception of their own about the developmental projects, which are meant to be beneficial for them. There was significant difference between the perception of extent of usefulness of the developmental programmes by male and female tribal agricultural labourers. In comparison with the tribal communities, the officials had higher perception level of usefulness of developmental programmes. This might be due to the factor that the officials work for the development of tribal communities and they expect such initiatives to be successful.

Keywords

Perception, tribal developmental programmes, Wayanad, Kattunaikan, Paniya, Kurichiya

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Introduction

The tribal population of in Kerala account for about 0.47 per cent of the total population and among its districts, Wayanad has the largest tribal population (Census, 2011). Among the main tribal groups, *Kurichiya* community enjoys a higher social status. *Paniya*

community comprises mostly the labourers and thus, are a medium-level status community. *Kattunaikan* community, who live an isolated life, are considered as low-status people among the tribal communities. Majority of the tribal population are socially marginalized, economically deprived and their access to education, health, employment and

income generation opportunities are finite. Despite government initiatives and developmental projects, the existing socio-economic profile of the tribal communities is low compared to the recognized population. The Indian Constitution makes special provisions for socio-economic development of the tribal groups. The 'Kerala model of development' is considered as a paragon in many developing countries, but in fact, the benefit of these developmental programmes does not reach the stakeholders. A lot of research has been done, much said and nothing did that could improve the living conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. It is very important to assess the perception of usefulness of tribal developmental programmes to make it more effective.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Mananthavady block of Wayanad district and from the block, three grama panchayats having highest population of Kurichya, *Paniya* and *Kattunaikan* communities respectively, was purposively selected. From each community, 60 agricultural labourers (30 women and 30 men) was selected randomly for the study, thus making a total of 180 as sample size. Thirty officials involved in the tribal development viz, agricultural officer, panchayath officials, social health workers, NGO officials etc. were also consulted to assess the extent of usefulness of the development programmes.

Pretested interview schedule was used to collect primary data from the respondents. Focus group discussions, observation methods and other selected participatory tools was also used. Frequency, mean, percentage, Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U test was used for the analysis. The scale developed by Fathimabi (1993) with slight modifications was used for the assessing the perception of

usefulness of developmental programmes by the tribal agricultural labourers.

Results and Discussion

Perception of Usefulness of Developmental Programmes by the Tribal Agricultural Labourers

The findings in Table 1 reveals that majority (90%) of the males and all the females of *Kattunaikan* community had a low level of perception of the usefulness of developmental programmes. Only 3.33% of the males had high level of perception. In the case of *Paniya* community, 63% of the males and 77% of the females had low level of perception, while 10% of the males and 3% of the females had high perception level. Comparatively better level of perception was observed among the *Kurichiya* people, where, 43.33% of males and 43% of females had medium level of perception, 16.67% of the males and 10% of the females had high level of perception. From the above table, it is clear that majority of the *Kattunaikan* agricultural labourers had low level of perception, while comparatively a greater number of respondents of *Kurichiya* community had medium level of perception. The greatest number of respondents with high level of perception was observed in *Kurichiya* community. The *Paniya* community lie in between the *Kattunaikan* and *Kurichiya* community in their level of perception. The high level of perception is owed to their better mass media exposure, awareness about the developmental programmes and political orientation.

To test whether there is any significant difference between the perception of extent of usefulness of developmental programmes of three tribal communities and officials, Kruskal-Wallis test was undertaken and results of the test revealed that there was significant difference in the perception of

extent of usefulness of developmental programmes of three tribal communities and officials. The estimated P- value in the above table which is smaller than 0.05 indicates that there is significant difference in the perception of extent of usefulness of developmental programmes of three tribal communities and officials at 1 per cent as well as 5 per cent level of significance.

It was found that the perception of extent of usefulness of developmental programmes varied with the communities. The *Kattunaikan* community had low perception level as compared to other two communities. This might be due to lower educational status, low mass media exposure and low awareness about the developmental programmes.

Among the three communities, the *Kurichiya* community had high level of perception. This is due to their comparatively better financial, educational status and high awareness of developmental programmes. In comparison with the tribal communities, the officials had higher perception level of usefulness of developmental programmes. This might be due to the factor that the officials work for the development of tribal communities and they expect such initiatives to be successful.

To identify the relationship between social discrimination experienced and perception of extent of usefulness of developmental programmes by the tribal agricultural labourers, correlation coefficient was worked out and it was found to be negative and significant (-0.358**) at 1 per cent level of significance. This was an indicator of inverse relationship between social discrimination and perception of extent of usefulness of developmental programmes. This might be due to the reason that the down-trodden or least developed communities will have low

media exposure, low bargaining powers, low awareness level and hence, low perception. Since they have low order of perception, they may experience a higher order of social discrimination.

In addition, the perception of officials engaged in tribal developmental programmes such as agricultural officers, NGO workers, social health workers were assessed. From the table 1, it is clear that majority of the tribal population (75%) has a low level of perception about the development programmes. In comparison with the tribal communities, the officials had higher perception level of usefulness of developmental programmes (mean score - 27.73). This might be due to the factor that the officials work for the development of tribal communities and they expect such initiatives to be successful. The results were in contradiction with the results of Mareeswaran *et al.*, (2017).

Gender Wise Difference in Perception of Tribal Agricultural Labourers

To find the difference in the perception of extent of usefulness of the developmental programmes by male and female tribal agricultural labourers, Mann-Whitney test was conducted and the results of the test revealed that there was significant difference between the perception of extent of usefulness of the developmental programmes by male and female tribal agricultural labourers.

The estimated P- value in the table which is smaller than 0.05 indicates that there is significant difference between the perception of extent of usefulness of the developmental programmes by male and female tribal agricultural labourers at both 5 per cent and 1 per cent level of significance.

Table.1 Distribution of respondents based on perception of usefulness of developmental programmes

Category	<i>Kattunaikan</i>				<i>Paniya</i>				<i>Kurichiya</i>				Overall (N= 180)				Officials (n= 30)	
	Male (n= 30)		Female (n= 30)		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		F	%
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Low	27	90	30	100	19	63.33	23	76.67	12	40	14	46.67	62	68.89	70	77.78	3	10
Medium	2	6.67	0	0	8	26.67	6	20	13	43.33	13	43.33	23	25.56	19	21.11	11	36.67
High	1	3.33	0	0	3	10	1	3.33	5	16.67	3	10	5	5.55	1	11.11	16	53.33
Mean score	64.18				92.89				121.28								181.78	
Kruskal- Wallis statistics, $\chi^2_{(3, 0.05)} = 84.350$ P value= 0.000																		

Table.2 Distribution of respondents based on gender wise difference in perception of tribal agricultural labourers of Wayanad district.

Gender	Perception
	Mean Score
Male	99.43
Female	81.57
MW (0.05)	-2.539
P value	0.018

Table.3 Correlation of perception with profile characteristics of male and female tribal agricultural labourers

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Correlation coefficient 'r' value	
		Male	Female
1	Age	0.184	-0.035
2	Educational status	0.059	0.271**
3	Annual income	0.383**	0.384**
4	Size of land holding	0.211	0.106
5	Land alienation	0.241	0.105
6	Indebtedness	-0.100	-0.198
7	Wage	0.399**	0.390**
8	Substance abuse	-0.057	-0.157
9	Migration	0.147	0.118
10	Exposure to mass media	0.095	0.353**
11	Social participation	0.057	0.473**
12	Self-confidence	0.252**	0.094
13	Health and nutrition	0.187	0.219
14	Access to common property resources	0.184	0.110
15	Political orientation	0.329**	0.300**
16	Awareness	0.855**	0.832**

**significant at 1% level

*significant at 5% level

While considering the aspect of perception of usefulness of developmental programmes, women were found to have a lower level of perception (81.57) than men owing to lower socio-economic status and social recognition that women possess in comparison with men. The results are on par with the results of Shincy (2012).

Factors Influencing Perception of Usefulness of Developmental Programmes by Tribal Agricultural Labourers

Table 3 shows the correlation of perception with profile characteristics of male and female tribal agricultural labourers.

Educational status was found to have a positive correlation with perception of the tribal agricultural labourers and moreover it was significant in the case of the females. Education brings a sense of awareness and ability to speak and express their opinions in front of others which encourages the tribal people to have a better level of perception about the developmental programmes. The results are on par with the results of Suresh (2015).

Annual income and wage had a positive influence on perception. More the wages, higher will be their annual income and socio-economic status, which gives them a confidence to express their views on the developmental projects.

While considering self- confidence, perception was found to be in positive correlation with the level of self- confidence. More the level of confidence, higher the level of perception. But in the case of females, the correlation was not significant since, females, irrespective of their communities was considered to be at a lower status than males. So, in many cases, women were not allowed to speak or express their views, restricting to have their own

perception. The results are on par with the results of Balakrishnan (2017) and Kumar and Govindaraju (2018).

Political orientation plays a major role in giving a support to the tribal agricultural labourers to raise their voices against the inequalities and social evils, which help them to have a perception of their own about the developmental projects, which are meant to be beneficial for them.

Exposure to mass media and awareness about the developmental programmes was observed to be positively influencing the perception of tribal agricultural labourers. When people have access to information sources, they will be aware about their rights and developmental projects, more will be their perception about the same. They will have their own suggestions for implementing these programmes. It was found to be significant for female respondents.

Social participation plays another pivotal role in encouraging the tribal people to have their views about their development. More the level of social participation, more will be their interaction with the outer world and hence, broader will be their thinking. In the case of females, the influence was found to be significant, since females with more level of participation, will definitely have the courage to raise their voices and express their opinion.

Age was found to be positively influencing the perception of male tribal labourers, while it was negative in the case of female labourers. As age increases, the level of perception of females decreased, which might be due to their ignorance and lack of awareness and botheration for the developmental activities.

Indebtedness and substance abuse were in negative correlation with perception. As tribal people get addicted to alcohol, smoking and

betel will reduce their ability to think and have their own views and opinion. Likewise, more the debt, more vulnerable their situation and less will be their botheration for thinking about the developmental programmes.

Other factors *viz*, size of landholding, land alienation, migration, health and nutrition and access to common property resources were found to positively influence perception, though not so significant.

Suggestions

Proper functioning of tribal employment exchange ensuring enrollment of unemployed tribal youth.

Ensuring the safeguard of constitutional provisions set aside for tribal people.

Conducting awareness programmes among the tribal people about their rights, provisions in law and development programmes.

Ample representation of tribal people from all the communities in political and social organizations.

Provision of educational infrastructure in the tribal areas and strict supervision on the school enrollment and dropouts.

Proper functioning of tribal employment exchange.

Active implementation of MNREGA programmes in tribal areas.

Though, Kerala has achieved phenomenal social development, celebrated as 'Kerala Model of Development', it is observed that the development process fails to circumscribe erstwhile tribal communities in it. The main objective of the study was to assess the extent

to which the developmental programmes implemented are beneficial for the clients. In spite of the execution of all the developmental activities, the progress made by the tribes people is meagre. Hence, it is of colossal necessity to further supplement and sharpen the developmental strategies and programmes in a much more effective way and to do social justice to the most neglected sections of our society.

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