

An Analysis of Social Transformation of Tribal Weekly Market in Coimbatore District

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Abstract

This study explores the socio-economic impacts of market access on tribal individuals across different ranges in Coimbatore District. It examines four case studies representing various socio-economic backgrounds: Papammal from the Karamadai Range, Kandhasamy from the Periyanaikpalayam Range, Valli from the Coimbatore Range, and Nanjammal from the Bolambatty Range. Through detailed analysis, the study highlights the challenges and benefits of market participation, including transportation difficulties, financial constraints, and the broader social transformations experienced by these individuals. The findings underscore the significant role of market access in enhancing awareness, skill development, health, gender equality, and community development among tribal communities.

Keywords: Tribal, Weekly Market, Social Transformation, Buying Behavior

Introduction to the Tribal Community

Tribal communities in India are indigenous groups that have historically lived in isolation from mainstream society. These communities often have distinct cultural, social, and economic practices, which contribute to their unique identity. Despite their rich heritage, they frequently face challenges related to economic development, education, and access to resources. The integration of tribal communities into broader economic systems, such as weekly markets, can play a crucial role in their socio-economic upliftment. This study focuses on how access to markets impacts the daily lives and socio-economic status of tribal individuals in Coimbatore District.

History of Study Areas

1. Karamadai Range:

Located in the western part of Coimbatore District, the Karamadai Range is characterized by its rural landscape and diverse tribal settlements. The area has historically been reliant on agriculture, with limited access to market infrastructure. The Karamadai weekly market serves as a crucial economic hub for local tribes, providing them with opportunities to sell produce and purchase essential goods.

2. Periyanaikpalayam Range:

Situated in the northern region of Coimbatore District, this range includes several tribal settlements that rely on agriculture and other traditional occupations. The Periyanaikpalayam Market is an essential venue for these communities, although logistical challenges such as transportation and distance often hinder market access.

3. Coimbatore Range:

This range encompasses a more developed region within Coimbatore District, with better infrastructure

and closer proximity to urban areas. The Vadavalli Market, in particular, serves as a vital economic center for local tribal populations, facilitating both business and daily needs.

4. Bolambatty Range:

Located in the eastern part of Coimbatore District, the Bolambatty Range is known for its diverse tribal settlements. The Perur Market is a significant economic outlet for these communities, though challenges related to transportation and market access remain prevalent.

Case Study

1. Karamadai Range:

Papammal, an illiterate widow from the Maanar settlement, works in agriculture and is an active participant in the Karamadai weekly market. Despite the challenges of her illiteracy and being a widow, Papammal manages to access the market, which is 36 kilometers away from her village, using a government bus. This journey takes her 9 to 10 hours, including waiting time, and costs her ₹100 per day.

Papammal's nuclear family consists of four members, with two engaged in agriculture. Although only one family member holds a degree, the family collectively manages their resources efficiently. They regularly consume a variety of items, including food grains, fruits, vegetables, snacks, bakery items, edible oils, and cosmetics.

Papammal's engagement with the market has led to significant positive changes in her life and community. She reports a strong increase in awareness, skill development, and decision-making abilities. Additionally, the market's influence has improved her health and well-being, promoted gender equality, and enhanced social inclusion. These changes have contributed to the overall development of her community, demonstrating the broader impact of market access on socio-economic transformation for tribal buyers like Papammal.

2. Periyanaikpalayam Range:

Kandhasamy, an illiterate farmer residing in the Manguli Settlement of Periyanaikpalayam Range, is the sole breadwinner in his nuclear family of two. His regular visits to the Periyanaikpalayam Market highlight his commitment to providing for his family, despite the challenges associated with market access.

The distance to the market is 16 km, and the journey involves using both a government bus and a jeep, costing ₹100 per visit. The travel time ranges from 6 to 8 hours due to the combined use of different modes of transport and the waiting times involved. This indicates the logistical challenges faced by Kandhasamy in accessing the market, a common issue in rural and tribal areas.

Kandhasamy's consumption pattern is broad, covering essential food grains, fruits and vegetables, snacks, bakery items, edible oils, and cosmetics. This variety reflects a balanced approach to purchasing, aiming to meet both basic needs and other household requirements.

The positive impact of social transformation on Kandhasamy is evident in his strong agreement with several key factors. Increased awareness and skill development suggest that market participation has empowered him to make informed decisions, enhancing his agricultural practices and overall livelihood. His agreement with improvements in decision-making skills, health and well-being, gender equality, social inclusion, and community development indicates that market access has had a multifaceted positive impact on his life.

Kandhasamy's case highlights the significance of market access in promoting socio-economic developm-

ent among tribal communities. Despite the barriers of distance, transport, and time, his engagement with the market has led to substantial personal and community benefits, illustrating the potential for market-driven social transformation in tribal areas.

3. Coimbatore Range:

Valli, a shop owner specializing in mangoes and pineapples near a local temple, is a key figure in her nuclear family of five. Her secondary education level reflects a moderate level of formal education, contributing to her entrepreneurial ventures. With three family members, including herself, actively engaged in occupations, her household demonstrates a strong work ethic and economic engagement.

Valli's regular visits to Vadavalli Market, located just 6 km from her home, are facilitated by a combination of government bus and her own vehicle. This proximity to the market allows her to visit frequently, with travel times ranging from 1 to 2 hours per trip and transport costs varying between ₹100 and ₹200 depending on the mode of transport used. The flexibility of having her own vehicle, in addition to public transport, reduces her reliance on inconsistent external transport and increases her market accessibility.

The range of items Valli purchases from the market is extensive, covering basic necessities such as food grains and edible oils, as well as fruits, vegetables, snacks, bakery items, cosmetics, and other household essentials. Her varied purchasing habits reflect a balanced approach to fulfilling both her business needs and household requirements.

Valli's strong agreement with the impact of social transformation variables signifies the positive changes she has experienced due to market participation. Increased awareness and skill development are particularly important, as they have likely contributed to her ability to manage her shop effectively and make informed business decisions. Her acknowledgment of improved decision-making skills, health and well-being, gender equality, social inclusion, and community development indicates that her engagement with the market has led to substantial personal growth and enhanced social standing within her community.

Valli's case illustrates the significant role that market access and participation play in the economic and social empowerment of tribal women. Her entrepreneurial spirit, combined with the benefits of market engagement, underscores the potential for broader social transformation within tribal communities, particularly when supported by education and access to resources.

4. Bolambatty Range:

Nanjammal is a daily wage laborer residing in Seengapathy Settlement of Bolambatty Range. Despite her primarily educated background, her current occupation reflects the need for steady income sources in her family. She lives in a nuclear family consisting of four members, with two individuals holding degrees, suggesting a level of educational attainment that may influence family dynamics and economic activities.

Her trips to Perur Market, which is 26 km away from her settlement, involve using both government buses and her own vehicle. The combined travel time of 5 to 6 hours, including waiting periods for the bus, highlights the logistical challenges faced in accessing the market. The transportation costs range from ₹100 to ₹200 per visit, reflecting the financial burden of frequent market trips.

Nanjammal's market shopping includes a broad spectrum of items such as food grains, fruits, vegetables, snacks, bakery items, edible oils, cosmetics, and other essentials. This diverse purchasing behavior suggests a well-rounded approach to fulfilling both household and personal needs.

The positive impact of social transformation on Nanjammal is evident in her strong agreement with key

factors like increased awareness, skill development, and improved decision-making skills. Her acknowledgment of benefits in health and well-being, gender equality, social inclusion, and community development reflects the broader positive effects of market participation on her life.

Nanjammal's case illustrates how market engagement can significantly influence social and economic aspects of tribal life. Despite the challenges of distance and transport, her ability to access a wide range of market goods and the positive impacts of social transformation highlight the potential for economic and social empowerment through active market participation.

Conclusion:

The study reveals that market access plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of tribal communities in Coimbatore District. Despite facing challenges such as distance, transportation, and financial constraints, individuals like Papammal, Kandhasamy, Valli, and Nanjammal experience substantial positive changes due to their market participation. These changes include increased awareness, skill development, improved decision-making, and enhanced health and social inclusion. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address logistical challenges and enhance market accessibility, thereby fostering broader socio-economic transformation within tribal communities.

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