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A STUDY ON SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT WELFARE INITIATIVES AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: *Ensuring equitable access to welfare benefits among indigenous populations remains a critical challenge in achieving inclusive and sustainable development, particularly in geographically isolated and socio-economically disadvantaged regions. Despite sustained governmental investments in tribal welfare programmes, empirical evidence concerning beneficiary perceptions and determinants of satisfaction remains limited. Addressing this research gap, the present study investigates the satisfaction levels of Scheduled Tribe beneficiaries towards government welfare initiatives in Valparai Taluk, Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, and examines the extent to which selected socio-economic characteristics influence satisfaction outcomes. The study adopts a cross-sectional quantitative research design based on primary data collected from 100 tribal beneficiaries through a pre-tested structured interview schedule, supplemented by secondary information obtained from scholarly literature, government reports, and official databases. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to delineate respondents' socio-economic profiles and satisfaction patterns, while the Chi-square test of independence was utilized to ascertain statistically significant associations between socio-economic variables and satisfaction levels. The findings reveal that beneficiary satisfaction is predominantly moderate, suggesting a partial realization of welfare objectives among tribal households. Statistical analysis demonstrates significant associations between satisfaction and age ($\chi^2 = 97.293, p < 0.001$), educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 29.074, p < 0.001$), and occupational status ($\chi^2 = 21.213, p < 0.001$), indicating that younger, relatively educated, and government-employed respondents exhibit comparatively higher levels of satisfaction. In contrast, elderly, illiterate, and agriculturally dependent beneficiaries report lower satisfaction, reflecting persistent inequalities in access, awareness, and utilization of welfare services. Gender, however, does not exert a statistically significant influence on satisfaction ($p = 0.367$). The study contributes to the limited empirical discourse on tribal welfare assessment by demonstrating that socio-economic vulnerabilities substantially shape perceptions of programme effectiveness. The findings underscore the necessity for context-sensitive policy interventions, strengthened last-mile service delivery mechanisms, targeted awareness campaigns, and livelihood diversification strategies to enhance the inclusiveness, responsiveness, and developmental impact of welfare initiatives among tribal communities residing in ecologically fragile and geographically remote regions.*

Index Terms: *Scheduled Tribes; Welfare Governance; Beneficiary Satisfaction; Socio-economic Determinants; Inclusive Development; Public Service Delivery; Tribal Welfare; Valparai Taluk*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities are defined by customs, traditions, and lifestyles that are intrinsically connected to nature and forest ecosystems. They are characterized by strong kinship ties, distinct cultural identities, and traditional systems of self-governance headed by community leaders such as the Moopanar in Tamil Nadu. Constitutionally recognized as Scheduled Tribes (STs) under Article 342, they constitute approximately 8.6% of India's population and are spread across various states, with each tribe preserving its unique way of life. Historically, tribes have maintained a symbiotic relationship with nature, depending on forests, hills, and agriculture for their livelihood. Their traditions, art forms, festivals, and indigenous knowledge systems reflect a profound ecological understanding and rich cultural heritage.

Valparai Taluk lies in the Western Ghats landscape of Coimbatore District and comprises a mountainous, thickly wooded tract that is integrated into the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR). The Western Ghats have been acknowledged internationally as one of the eight "hottest hotspots" for biodiversity and hold UNESCO World Heritage status. Several aboriginal communities, such as the Kadar, Malasar, Muthuvan, and Irula, inhabit this fragile ecosystem. They live in micro-hamlets locally termed kudis or pathis, situated amid tea plantations and protected forests. The economic sustenance of these groups is largely derived from estate labour, gathering of non-timber forest produce, and marginal farming. Factors such as physical inaccessibility, undulating topography, intense monsoonal rainfall, and restrictive conservation norms of the ATR contribute to their socio-spatial marginalization from mainstream development processes. Despite multiple development interventions launched by the Union and State Governments in the sectors of education, healthcare, housing, and income generation, the actual penetration and uptake of these initiatives among the tribal population continues to be inadequate.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Notwithstanding the implementation of numerous development interventions and sensitization initiatives for tribal welfare by the government, communities belonging to Scheduled Tribes in Valparai Taluk continue to demonstrate limited awareness and suboptimal uptake of benefits. This is attributed to factors such as low literacy, linguistic differences, inadequate infrastructure connectivity, and seasonal inaccessibility due to heavy monsoons. As a result, the anticipated impact of these initiatives fails to permeate to the intended beneficiaries at the grassroots. Furthermore, there exists a significant research gap concerning empirical evidence on beneficiary satisfaction regarding scheme delivery in this specific locale. Therefore, the present investigation seeks to evaluate the satisfaction of tribal beneficiaries with respect to public welfare initiatives in Valparai Taluk and to determine the determinants affecting satisfaction, with the objective of proposing strategies for enhanced service delivery and equitable development.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio-economic profile of tribals
- To analyze the satisfaction of government welfare scheme among tribes.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The present study, entitled "*Satisfaction with Government Welfare Initiatives among Tribal Communities*," adopts a descriptive and analytical research design utilizing a mixed-source approach to data collection. The study seeks to assess the socio-economic characteristics of tribal households, examine their access to and utilization of government welfare programmes, and evaluates their level of satisfaction with these initiatives. The descriptive component facilitates the profiling of respondents and

welfare utilization patterns, while the analytical component enables the examination of associations between socio-economic variables and satisfaction outcomes.

4.2 Sources of Data

The investigation is based on both primary and secondary data sources to ensure methodological rigor and enhance the validity of findings.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from tribal respondents through an extensive field survey. A structured interview schedule was developed based on the objectives of the study and subjected to pre-testing to ascertain its clarity, relevance, and reliability. The instrument comprised questions related to demographic and socio-economic characteristics, awareness of welfare schemes, accessibility, utilization patterns, perceived benefits, and overall satisfaction with government interventions. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to obtain authentic first-hand information, minimize non-response bias, and facilitate effective communication with respondents, particularly in areas characterized by linguistic and educational constraints.

Secondary Data

Secondary information was compiled from a wide range of scholarly and institutional sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government reports, census publications, policy documents, statistical handbooks, and published research studies. Relevant data were also obtained from official publications and web portals of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, the Government of Tamil Nadu, and other concerned agencies. These sources provided contextual insights into tribal welfare policies, programmed implementation mechanisms, and developmental indicators.

4.3 Sampling Procedure

The respondents included in the study were selected using an appropriate sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of the target tribal population. The sample size was determined considering the study objectives, population distribution, accessibility of respondents, and resource constraints. The adopted sampling framework aimed to capture variations in socio-economic characteristics and welfare experiences among tribal households.

4.4 Analytical Framework

Following data collection, the responses were systematically coded, verified, classified, and entered into a master database for analysis. Statistical analyses were performed to derive meaningful interpretations and support empirical conclusions.

The following statistical techniques were employed:

Simple Percentage Analysis

Percentage analysis was used to summarize and interpret the socio-economic profile of respondents, levels of awareness, utilization patterns of welfare schemes, and satisfaction distribution. This method facilitates an intuitive understanding of proportional differences among categories.

Chi-Square Test of Association

The Chi-square (χ^2) test was employed to examine the existence of statistically significant relationships between selected socio-economic variables and respondents' satisfaction with government welfare initiatives. The test assists in determining whether variations in satisfaction levels are associated with demographic and economic characteristics beyond random chance.

The analytical framework adopted in the study provides a robust empirical basis for understanding the effectiveness of welfare interventions and identifying factors influencing beneficiary satisfaction among tribal communities.

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The current investigation is delimited to evaluating the degree of satisfaction among Scheduled Tribe beneficiaries who have accessed public welfare initiatives in Valparai Taluk of Coimbatore

District. The research specifically examines the correlation between beneficiary satisfaction and demographic as well as socio-economic determinants, namely age, gender, literacy level, and livelihood. Quantitative interpretation is performed through descriptive methods such as percentage analysis, complemented by inferential statistics, notably the Chi-square technique, to ascertain the statistical significance of associations. Geographically, the investigation encompasses only tribal households within Valparai Taluk and excludes other regions and populations not covered under the schemes.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The geographical coverage of the present investigation is restricted exclusively to Scheduled Tribe communities residing in Valparai Taluk, Coimbatore District.
- The sample size restricted to 100 respondents.
- The study was conducted within limited time period.
- The findings are applicable only to Valparai Taluk.
- The conclusions are drawn are primarily based on the opinion expressed by the respondents of tribes.

7. REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Chitra and Buvana (2023) examined the present socio-economic conditions of Kattunayakan tribal women in Coimbatore District. Their study, based on secondary data, highlighted that tribal women are often compelled to conform to traditional norms that restrict their autonomy, including control over livelihood systems, household decisions, and personal choices. The researchers observed that the collective level of aspiration among tribal women tends to remain low, a condition not exclusive to women but also prevalent among other marginalized groups experiencing helplessness and frustration. The study suggested the need for skill development and vocational training programmes specifically designed for tribal women in rural areas. Sridharan and Kalpana (2017) conducted a study on the socio-cultural and behavioural aspects of tribal communities in the Anamalai Hills, Tamil Nadu. Adopting a descriptive research design, the authors collected data from 3,000 hamlets inhabited by the Malapulan hill tribes using structured questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and focus group discussions. Medical camps conducted with the assistance of local Anganwadi teachers facilitated data collection. The study identified tribal cultural practices as a significant factor influencing alcoholism and substance abuse among the settlements. The findings emphasized the need for culturally sensitive interventions and highlighted the potential of integrating healthcare access through community-based programmes in remote forest areas.

8. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

8.1 Age –Wise Distribution

The following table classifies the tribes based on their age. The tribes were classified into five groups as Below 20 Years, 21-35 Years, 36-45 Years, 46-60 Years and Above 60 Years.

Table 1: Tribes based on their age

Age	No Of Tribes	Percentage
Below 20 Years	9	9.0
21-35 Years	27	27.0
36-45 Years	33	33.0
46-60 Years	15	15.0
Above 60 Years	16	16.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Calculated through primary data

The above table reveals that out of 100 respondents, 9 (9.0%) belong to the age group of below 20 years, 27 (27.0%) are in 21–35 years, 33 (33.0%) are in 36–45 years, 15 (15.0%) are in 46–60 years, and 16 (16.0%) are above 60 years. The analysis shows that the 36–45 years age group constitutes the majority of the respondents.

8.2 Gender Section

The following table classifies the tribes based on their gender. The tribes were classified into male and female

Table 2: Tribes based on their genders

Age	No. of Tribes	Percentage
Male	56	56.0
Female	44	44.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Calculated through primary data

The above table illustrates that out of 100 respondents, 56 (56.0%) are male and 44 (44.0%) are female. It is observed from the above table .The analysis shows that the 36–45 years age group constitutes the majority of the respondents.

8.3 Educational Status of Tribal Respondents

The following table classifies the tribes based on their qualification. The tribes were classified into four groups as Illiterate, SSLC, HSC and Others.

Table 3: Tribes based on their qualification

Educational Qualification	No. of Tribes	Percentage
Illiterate	53	53.0
Sslc	44	44.0
Hsc	1	1.0
Others(It)	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Calculated through primary data

The above table reveals that out of 100 respondents, 53 (53.0%) belong to illiterate, 44 (44.0%) are SSLC, 1 (1.0%) and HSC, 2 (2.0%) others. The data highlights that low literacy levels persist among the tribal beneficiaries

8.4 Occupational Distribution of Tribal Respondents

The following table classifies the tribes based on their qualification. The tribes were classified into two groups as agriculture and government officers

Table 4: Occupational Distribution of Tribal Respondents

Occupation	No. of Tribes	Percentage
Agriculture	96	96.0
Government	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Calculated through primary data

The above table reveals that out of 100 respondents, 96 (96.0%) belong to agriculture, 4 (4.0%) are government workers. This distribution reflects the agrarian nature of livelihoods in Valparai Taluk and indicates limited diversification into non-farm employment among the tribal communities studied.

8.4 Association between Age and Level of satisfaction with government welfare initiatives

A Chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the association between age and level of satisfaction of government schemes offered.

Table 5: A Chi-square test of independence

Age	Level of Satisfaction			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Below 20 Years	0	4	5	9
	.0%	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
21-35 Years	0	26	1	27
	.0%	96.3%	3.7%	100.0%
36-45 Years	0	31	2	33
	.0%	93.9%	6.1%	100.0%
46-60 Years	1	13	1	15
	6.7%	86.7%	6.7%	100.0%
Above 60 Years	13	3	0	16
	81.2%	18.8%	.0%	100.0%
Total	14	77	9	100
	14.0%	77.0%	9.0%	100.0%
Df: 8	Chi-Square: 97.293		P Value: .000	Significant

Source: Calculated through collected data

The Chi-square test for independence was applied to ascertain the relationship between age and satisfaction levels. The analysis yielded ($\chi^2 = 97.293$, $df = 8$, $p = .000$). Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected.

8.5 Gender and Level Of Satisfaction Of Government Schemes Offered

To examine the association between gender and level of satisfaction of government schemes offered.

Table 6: To examine the association between gender and level of satisfaction

Gender	Level Of Satisfaction			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Female	7	35	2	44
	15.9%	79.5%	4.5%	100.0%
Male	7	42	7	56
	12.5%	75.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	14	77	9	100
	14.0%	77.0%	9.0%	100.0%
DF: 2	Chi-square: 2.003		P Value: .367	NOT SIGNIFICANT

The results of the Chi-square test for independence indicate no statistically significant relationship between gender and satisfaction level, ($\chi^2=2.003$, $p=.367$). As the p-value exceeds the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is retained

An examination of the distribution shows that a predominant proportion of both female (79.5%) and male (75.0%) beneficiaries expressed 'Medium' satisfaction. The levels of 'Low' and 'High' satisfaction were also comparable across genders. This finding implies that gender does not play a determining role in shaping satisfaction towards government welfare initiatives among the tribal beneficiaries in Valparai Taluk.

8.6 Educational qualification and level of satisfaction of government schemes initiatives

Association between educational qualification and level of satisfaction of government schemes initiatives

Table 7: To examine the association between gender and level of satisfaction of government schemes initiatives

Educational Qualification	Level Of Satisfaction			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Illiterate	12	41	0	53
	22.6%	77.4%	.0%	100.0%
SSLC	2	35	7	44
	4.5%	79.5%	15.9%	100.0%
HSC	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Others (Specify)	0	1	1	2
	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	14	77	9	100
	14.0%	77.0%	9.0%	100.0%
DF: 6	Chi-square: 29.074			P Value: .000
				SIGNIFICANT

To assess whether educational attainment influences satisfaction levels, a Chi-square test for independence was employed. ($\chi^2=29.074$, $p=.000$). The cross-tabulation indicates that illiterate respondents predominantly reported 'Medium' satisfaction (77.4%), with 22.6% reporting 'Low' satisfaction and none reporting 'High' satisfaction. Among SSLC qualified respondents, 79.5% indicated 'Medium' satisfaction, while 15.9% reported 'High' satisfaction. The single respondent with HSC qualification reported 'High' satisfaction.

8.7 Occupation and Level of Satisfaction with Government Welfare Initiatives.

State the association between occupation and level of satisfaction of government schemes

OCCUPATION	LEVEL OF SATISFACTION			TOTAL
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	
AGRICULTURE	14	76	6	96
	14.6%	79.2%	6.2%	100.0%
GOVERNMENT	0	1	3	4
	.0%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Total	14	77	9	100
	14.0%	77.0%	9.0%	100.0%
DF: 2	Chi-square: 21.213		P Value: .000	SIGNIFICANT

The data shows that beneficiaries engaged in agriculture and allied activities predominantly reported 'Medium' satisfaction (79.2%), whereas beneficiaries in government service predominantly reported 'High' satisfaction (75.0%). This suggests that occupational status influences the perceived effectiveness of welfare initiatives, with government employees expressing greater satisfaction compared to those dependent on agriculture in Valparai Taluk.

9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The major findings derived from the analysis of primary data collected from 100 tribal beneficiaries in Valparai Taluk are summarized as follows:

- (i) Most 33(33.0%) of the respondents are 36 years to 45 years.
- (ii) Near-equal 56(56.0%) of the representation are male.
- (iii) A significant proportion 53(53.0%) tribes are Illiterate
- (iv) Majority 96(96.0%) are engaged in agriculture
- (v) Chi-Square shows that there is exist a significant association between age and level of satisfaction
- (vi) The analysis indicates no statistically significant association between gender and level of satisfaction with government welfare initiatives,

- (vii) No statistically significant association was observed between educational qualification and satisfaction level
- (viii) Statistically significant association between occupation and satisfaction level.

10. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the satisfaction levels of tribal beneficiaries towards government welfare initiatives in Valparai Taluk, Coimbatore District. The empirical analysis reveals that satisfaction is significantly influenced by age and occupational status. Beneficiaries in younger age cohorts and those employed in government service reported comparatively higher satisfaction levels. In contrast, elderly respondents, illiterate beneficiaries, and those dependent on agriculture and allied activities exhibited lower satisfaction. The findings indicate no statistically significant association between gender and satisfaction level. The study concludes that socio-economic variables, particularly age and occupation, are critical determinants of perceived satisfaction among tribal beneficiaries in the study area. The disparity suggests that existing welfare delivery mechanisms may not be equally effective across all demographic segments of the tribal population in Valparai Taluk.

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