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Diffusion Of Innovations Among Scheduled Caste Population In Mosuru Village, Andhra Pradesh.

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I Abstract

This paper explores the diffusion of innovations among the Scheduled Caste population in Mosuru Village, Andhra Pradesh. The study examines how new ideas, practices, and technologies are communicated and adopted within this marginalized community. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to analyze the factors influencing the diffusion process. Key findings reveal the significant roles of social networks, media access, and change agents in the adoption of innovations. The study contributes to the understanding of how targeted communication strategies can enhance development efforts in marginalized communities. The entertainment media play the major part by helping to promote a greater receptiveness to new values and an openness to change. One of the more important effects is to gradually alter the cultural climate and to introduce new values in a slow, diffuse way.

Key words: Diffusion of innovations, Scheduled Caste, Mosuru Village, development communication, social networks.

II. Introduction

The concept of diffusion of innovations, introduced by Everett Rogers in 1962, has been extensively studied across various contexts, from technological advancements in urban areas to agricultural practices in rural settings. However, its application among marginalized communities, particularly the Scheduled Caste population in India, remains underexplored.

Mosuru Village in Andhra Pradesh is home to a significant Scheduled Caste population. Historically marginalized, this community faces unique challenges in accessing and adopting new innovations. Understanding the diffusion process within this context can provide valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners. With this background, the present study is attempted to examine how the diffusion of innovations model has its' applicability among the Scheduled Caste population in a remote village, Mosuru in Andhra Pradesh. The Scheduled Caste population is deprived of the benefits of new innovation as they are treated as untouchables for many years in the country. If they are exposed to new ideas, practices, and innovations by interacting with early adopters, they tend to gain knowledge of new practices. They are not allowed to interact with early adopters in relation to education, scientific knowledge, new technology, and new agricultural practices and so on, hence they remained as marginalized community in a developing society. The present chapter contains two parts: Part I focuses on the concepts related to development, and the role of media in development. Part II presents details about the Scheduled Castes in India.

The Scheduled Castes constituted a significant demographic strength in India. In the year 1935, the Scheduled Castes were estimated to be about 5 cores. In the year 1981, their estimated population was 10.5 cores and in the year 1991 which constitutes 16.4 %of the total population (Jadhav, 2008). The decadal growth of Scheduled Castes in India over 1991 was 30 per cent, which is more than decadal growth of general population. Nearly 84 %of the Scheduled Castes population lives in 10 states. In the states of Himachal Pradesh, West-Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, 25.3 % of its total, 23.6 %of its total and 21 % of its total population respectively, belonged to Scheduled Castes. In Maharashtra, 11.1 % of its population is SCs, interestingly, 28 % of the total population of Punjab belong to Scheduled Castes. Other states like Bihar (14.6 %of its total), Haryana (19.8 % of its total), Karnataka (16.4 % of its total), Madhya Pradesh (14.5 % of its total), Orissa (16.20 % of its total) Andhra Pradesh (15.9 % of its total) and Tamil Nadu (19.2 % of its total) have significant strength of Scheduled Castes population. According to the 2001 Census, the Scheduled Caste population in India constituted (16.2 %) of the country's total population. Being rural people, four fifth (79.8 per cent) of them live in rural areas and rest one-fifth (20.2 per cent) live in urban areas. The sex ratio of 936 females per 1000 males is slightly higher than national average of 933 sex ratio. The highest percentage of Scheduled Caste population to the total Scheduled Caste population of the country live in Uttar Pradesh (21.1 per cent) followed by West Bengal (11.1 per cent) and Bihar (7.8 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (7.4 percent) and Tamil Nadu (7.1 percent). In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Pondicherry proportion of SC population is exactly equal to the National average of 16.2 per cent. The smallest concentration of the Scheduled Caste population is in the North-Eastern tribal States such as Mizoram (with negligible or only 272 persons) followed by Meghalaya (0.5 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (0.6 per cent). In 2011 census, the highest percentage of SC population is found in Punjab (31.9%), followed by Himachal Pradesh (25.2%), West Bengal (23.5%), Uttar Pradesh (20.7%), Haryana (20.1%) and so on.

This study aims to: Analyze the factors influencing the diffusion of innovations among the Scheduled Caste population in Mosuru Village. Identify the roles of social networks, media access, and change agents in the adoption process. Provide recommendations for effective development communication strategies.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory: Everett Rogers' theory outlines how new ideas and technologies spread within a society. Key components include the innovation itself, communication channels, time, and the social system.

Studies on Marginalized Communities: Existing research highlights the barriers faced by marginalized communities in adopting innovations, including socioeconomic constraints, lack of access to information, and cultural resistance.

Role of Social Networks and Media: Social networks play a crucial role in the diffusion process, facilitating interpersonal communication and peer influence. Media, particularly community-based channels, can bridge information gaps and enhance awareness.

Significance of the Study: Diffusion of innovations plays a key role in the process of development, and the media role particularly the emerging social media is crucial to create awareness among the stakeholders/beneficiaries about innovations. The study setting is a rural village in which Schedule Caste population predominantly live in that village. The village is located in Vizianagaram district, a backward and underdeveloped district in Andhra Pradesh the present study makes an attempt to examine the socio-demographic profile of the SC population in Vizianagaram district apart from the other issues that center around this population segment.

III. Data and Methodology

The setting for the research study is a typical Indian village, Mosuru, Pachipenta Mandal, Vizianagaram district. The total households of the village are 3150. This population consists of different religions such as Hindus and Christians. Also, different caste groups such as Brahmins, Velamas, Turpu Kapus, Yadavas, Vysyas, Scheduled 64 Castes,. Research Design: A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. This design ensures a comprehensive understanding of the diffusion process.

Data Collection Instrument: The data collection instrument was an interview schedule as most of the respondents were illiterate although the interview schedule was translated into local (Telugu) language. Therefore, the researcher read each question, and ascertained responses from the respondents. The interview schedule was prepared keeping in view the standard protocol of the preparation of a questionnaire. It contained factual questions such as age, gender, education, marital status, income and expenditure and so on. Also, the interview schedule contained the subjective questions about the beliefs, attitudes, feelings and so on.

For, example, question no.37 focused on the beliefs of the respondents such as belief in evil eye, black magic, witchcraft and so on. Some questions dealt with their attitudes about – dowry, girl child education, equal pay for women and so on. These questions are further divided into close-ended and openended questions. Close-ended questions dealt with the responses given by the researcher whereas open-ended questions dealt with free response of the respondent. For instance, question 69 contained the questions such as 'what are the developmental programmes implemented in the village/area?' 'How did you learn about them? 'What specific benefits have you received from them in the last three years?

Data Collection Procedure: The data pertaining to the study were collected from October 1 to December31, 2022 after the Covid -19 effect. When the respondents were free from fear, the researcher made three visits to the village to identify the households of the respondents. The 77 researcher became familiarized himself with the community leaders. The volunteers appointed by the government initially were contacted by the researcher and sought their cooperation in collecting the data. The volunteers who look after the implementation of the welfare schemes of the government can identify the respondents of the Schedule Caste population, and these volunteers understood the purpose of the research. Thus, the researcher made an entry into the research site, and all the colonies where the respondents stayed were identified, by the researcher who met the respondents. The researcher explained the purpose and significance of the work to the respondents and requested them to share the data. He also assured them that the data would be kept confidential, and it would not be shared with others. Once the researcher gained the confidence of the respondent, he embarked on the data collection process. As the months of October, November and December were considered winter months, the respondents did not find much labour work, except the agricultural works. Thus, the researcher found this was convenient period for him to collect the data as the respondents leave their homes late for work and return home early. The researcher started collecting data from the respondents when they were comfortable to share the data with the researcher. He went to their houses when he fixed convenient time mutually and they were informed about his visit a day before . Prior, he also informed them that the data collection would take time of nearly one hour. The data collection instrument was an interview schedule, he read each question to them in local language and recorded their responses in the questionnaire. Each session was taking one hour or more, and the researcher ensured the presence of the respondent while requesting others not to assemble at the house of the respondent. Normally, in the Indian countryside, neighbors evince interest to listen to the conversation between the researcher and the respondent, and it would disturb the respondent not to share the personal information. Therefore, the researcher did not allow others to stay nearby and collected data from the respondents. Thus, the researcher could collect from two or three respondents in a day, and at this rate the researcher could complete data collection in three months.

Data Collection: Quantitative data were collected through surveys administered to 100 households in Mosuru Village. The survey included questions on demographics, media access, social network strength, and innovation adoption.

Qualitative data were obtained from in-depth interviews with 20 key informants, including village leaders, educators, and early adopters of innovations. These interviews provided contextual insights and detailed narratives.

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the selection of a village for the purpose of data collection was done by using a multi-stage sampling. Since, the focus of the study is on Scheduled Caste population in a village, a district was randomly selected from thirteen districts in Andhra Pradesh. Vizianagaram district, came as a randomly selected district in the stage I. In Vizianagaram district, 34 mandals (blocks) consisting of 234 villages are there, Pachipenta mandal was randomly selected in stage II. This mandal has the highest number of households with Scheduled Caste population in villages. In stage III, one village out of 234 villages was randomly chosen, and the name of the village, Mosuru, figured under this sample (See figure 11 & 12). The total number of households in Mosuru is 3150. The total number of SC households is 360. Out of these 360 SC populations, a representative sample of 186 households was selected randomly for the purpose of data collection (Table 5). In these household, the head of the family was selected for administering the interview schedule. The structured interview scheduled was administered to the household to ascertain the data pertaining to the study

IV. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to identify factors influencing innovation adoption. Qualitative data were coded and thematically analyzed to uncover patterns and themes.

The data thus collected was analyzed by developing a code for each variable in order to use SPSS 16.0 version. The data was entered into SPSS software and was analyzed into different variables. Cross-tabulation was done keeping in view the objectives of the study, and appropriate statistical tests were used depending upon the need of the analysis. The relationships between variables were analyzed.

Quantitative Analysis: The survey results indicate that education level, media exposure, and social network strength significantly influence innovation adoption. Households with higher education levels and better media access are more likely to adopt new practices.

Qualitative Insights: Interviews revealed that interpersonal communication and community leaders play pivotal roles in the diffusion process. Early adopters often act as change agents, influencing their peers through demonstrations and personal testimonials.

V. Results and Discussion

The study identifies several barriers, including socioeconomic constraints, limited access to information, and cultural resistance. These factors hinder the diffusion process and require targeted interventions. Role of Change Agents and Media are crucial in overcoming these barriers. Community leaders and early adopters can serve as role models, while media can provide consistent and reliable information. Policy Implications should focus on enhancing media access and strengthening social networks within marginalized communities. Tailored communication strategies that consider local contexts and cultural nuances are essential.

VI. Summary and Conclusions

The study concludes that effective diffusion of innovations in marginalized communities requires targeted communication strategies that leverage social networks and address specific barriers to adoption.

Recommendations: Development practitioners should focus on engaging community leaders and early adopters as change agents. Media strategies should prioritize local content and accessibility.

Future Research: Future studies should explore the long-term impact of diffusion interventions and the role of digital media in reaching marginalized populations. The present study focused only on Scheduled caste population in a village setting, further research may be undertaken to study the diffusion of innovations among the other backward castes in villages in Andhra Pradesh. As there are no studies available about these specific groups earlier further research will be helpful for policy design to study these OBCs.

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