



LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION: INSIGHTS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

¹Sreekutty M J, ²Dr. Joseph M K

¹Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor

¹Department of Social Work,

¹Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery, Ernakulam, India

Abstract: Scheduled tribes are considered to be the most vulnerable and disadvantaged group in India. Scheduled tribes constitute 8.6 percentage of the total population in India. Tribal communities are mostly concentrated in remote rural areas and Tribes depends on the forest for their livelihood, especially Agriculture and related activities. The income from agriculture and related activities has become insufficient for their survival nowadays as it has become barely at more or less subsistence level. Thus, in recent times a shift from their traditional agriculture to non-agriculture can be seen as evident. The main reason behind the transition is to improve the income of the household and reduce the risk of uncertainty. Apart from making income and reducing risk, many other factors are responsible for this transition. The practice of diverse livelihood approach is considered to be remunerative than the traditional agricultural practice and also it increases livelihood choices. Thus, the present paper focused on this diversification of tribal livelihood considering their socio-demographic profile and livelihood practices. Both primary and secondary data sources were included in the study.

Key words: Livelihood, Diversification, Agriculture, Non-Agriculture, Scheduled Tribes

Introduction

According to (Conway, 1992) a livelihood “comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood can be said to be sustainable only when it is able to cope with the stress and shocks and maintain or improve its capacities and assets for now as well as for future, while not undermining the natural resource base”. The livelihood practices among tribal populations differ in a range of dimensions, from place to place and community to community. Many of the livelihood practices among tribes are predetermined and by birth itself. These kinds of livelihoods are referred to as ascriptive livelihood. (Gogoi, 2020) studied that livelihood diversification, agricultural intensification and temporal migration are three of the major strategies adopted by the population to meet their needs.

The majority of tribes in India are depended on the forest for their living. It includes a collection of minor forest produce, cultivation, fishing, animal husbandry etc. they relied upon agriculture and allied activities for supporting their living. But nowadays the benefits from agriculture and related activities are not sufficient for their increased needs of daily life. Depending only on agriculture is not enough for meeting their needs. Moreover, the percentage of agriculture in the GDP shows diminished growth. Thus, depending only on agriculture as an income source creates risk and uncertainty in meeting the demands of life. Diversification of livelihood help in reducing the negative impact of agriculture as a single income source.

(Ellis, 1998) defined livelihood diversification “as a process by which household members construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standards of living”. In short, Livelihood diversification is a process utilized by household members to improve their standard of living and survival. World Bank explains that diversification is a strategy that aims to increase household income and minimize risks of failure. This strategy can be utilized in various ways; (a) to increase household incomes; and (b) to minimize risks of livelihood failure. Broadly, the rationale for diversification emanates from the opportunities for more employment and the generation of higher incomes through more efficient use of resources and through the exploitation of comparative advantage.

Literature shows that upgrading existing livelihood practices is more realistic than specializing within the existing livelihood practices. The rural economy especially the tribal economy is not fully dependent on agriculture but on a diverse set of livelihood activities for their survival. Diversification of livelihood activities may occur voluntarily or involuntarily as a response to the situation. (Reardon, 1997) considered land area, size of the family, access to capital and access to education as factors in determining the livelihood diversification. Empirical shreds of evidence show that various socio, economic and demographic factors contributed to livelihood diversification. There is evidence from global studies on accompanying agricultural livelihood activities with other livelihood activities. In Africa people are involved in agricultural activities as their main source of livelihood, however, they also engage in other income-generating activities to augment the main source of income (Oluwakemi, 2013).

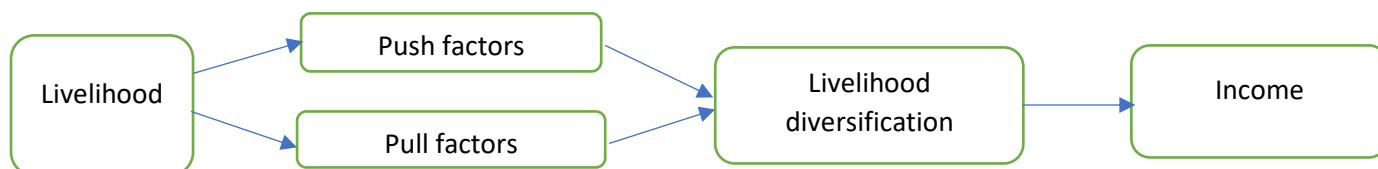
Diversification can have both positive and negative influence on the livelihood of people. The influence is positive if it raises the capacity of households to cope with the risks and vulnerabilities and the influence is negative if it reduces the capacity of the people to cope with the stresses.

Diversification of livelihood are caused by many Push factors and Pull factors. People or households may diverse their livelihood from traditional agriculture activities to other income generating activities. It may either complement the primary livelihood activity or exit from the primary source and solely depends on the new livelihood source. The most common push factors include climate uncertainty and seasonality. Other factors include poor infrastructure, problems in market access and land related constraints. The diversification due to Pull factors are termed as survival led diversification. The households or people under survival led diversification will have low endowments and thus follows low return livelihood activities.

The Pull factors are positive factors that fascinate people to follow other livelihood activities within or outside primary livelihood source. They are popularly known as opportunity-led diversification as they are caused by the pull factors. The households or people under opportunity led diversification will have high endowments which lead them to follow high return livelihood activities.

Figure 1

Conceptualisation of livelihood diversification



Note: The diagrammatic illustration shows how livelihood of tribal communities are influenced by different push and pull factors leading to practice diversified livelihood strategies to earn improved income.

Objectives

1. To study the basic demographic details of the respondents
2. To identify livelihood diversification strategies adopted by tribes in the study area
3. To understand the determinants of livelihood diversification among tribes

Study area: The study was conducted among tribes in Kerala. The samples were collected from the tribal area where the population was high. The three major tribal districts in Kerala are Wayanad, Palakkad and Idukki. The questionnaires were distributed among tribes and collected data. A total of 60 samples were collected and analysed.

Materials and methods: This descriptive study was conducted among the tribal population in Kerala. Data was collected from all regions of Kerala through an anonymous online questionnaire. Google form was used to collect the data. A link containing the questionnaire was shared using social media platform. The respondents were able to complete the questionnaire using their mobile phones and laptops whichever was available to them. The criteria to be included in the study are; they must be 18 years of age and above, able to read and write, able and has access to use social media platforms and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

The secondary data was collected from various journal articles, websites, government e documents and e-books.

Results and discussion

Table I. Socio demographic profile and livelihood changes

Variables	Livelihood changes		
	Yes	No	Total
Age			
18-28	40 (85.1%)	7 (14.9%)	47
28-38	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	7

38-48	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	3
48-58	2 (100%)	0	2
58-68	1 (100%)	0	1
Total	51 (85%)	9 (15%)	100
Gender			
Male	23 (79.3%)	6 (20.7%)	29
Female	28 (90.3%)	3 (9.7%)	31
Total	51 (85%)	9 (15%)	60
Education			
Not gone for school	1 (100%)	0	1
Dropout	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	5
Primary level	2 (100%)	0	2
High school	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	4
SSLC	11 (73.3%)	4 (26.7%)	15
Plus-two	14 (100%)	0	14
Degree	16 (94.1%)	1 (5.9%)	17
PG and above	2 (100%)	0	2
Total	51 (85%)	9 (15%)	60
Occupation			
Unemployed	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	8
Wage labourer	9 (64.3%)	5 (35.7%)	14
Farmer	8 (100%)	0	8
Student	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	20
Private employee	2 (100%)	0	2
Government employee	6 (100%)	0	6
Home maker	2 (100%)	0	2
Annual income			
0-10000	11 (73.3%)	4 (26.7%)	15
10000-20000	4 (100%)	0	4
20000-30000	1 (100%)	0	1
30000-40000	5 (100%)	0	5
40000-50000	29 (85.3%)	5 (14.7%)	34
50000-60000	1 (100%)	0	1
Total	51 (85.0%)	9 (15.0%)	60

Note: In the table, the compared responses match the total surveyed responses. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to summarize the results of the study. The data collected during the month of October 2021 and 60 responses were received. 52% accounted for women and 48% were male. 23% of the male opined that they faced change in their livelihood during the past 10 years and 28% women supported the same. The majority of the respondents fall into the age category of 18-28 who have positive response towards the livelihood changes. 85.1% under the age category 18-28 responded a change in the livelihood. The educational status of the respondents shows a positive response as well. Majority of them completed a degree (28.3%) or higher secondary education (23.3%) or at least SSLC (25%) and responded a change in the livelihood. 33.3% of the respondents were students in the study. 23.3% constituted wage laborer's where 64.3% responded to a change in their livelihood during the last 10 years. There were 6 government employees and 2 private employees. Farmer and unemployed fall under 13.3% of the total respondents. Majority of the respondents have an income range between 40000-50000 followed by 0-10000.

Table no. II. Relation between Traditional livelihood strategies and livelihood changes

Occupation	Yes	No	Total
------------	-----	----	-------

Farmer	41 (83.7%)	8 (16.3%)	49
Wage labourer	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)	8
Unemployed	2 (100%)	0	2
Forest worker	1 (100%)	0	1
Total	51 (85%)	9 (15%)	60

Note: from the table, it is evident that majority of the tribes in the population depended on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood followed by wage labour, unemployment and forest related employment. 49 respondents, about 81.6%, depended on agriculture. 13.3 percentage of the respondents depended on wage labour. 0.33% were unemployed while 0.017 percentage are forest workers. It can be understood from the data that tribes depended on forest for agriculture and other related activities than income generating activities for their sustenance. Agriculture and related activities contributed majority to their income. 83.7 percentage of the farmers opined that there is a change in the livelihood for the last 10 years and 16.3% did not find any change in the livelihood. Among the wage labourers 87.5% felt a livelihood change while 12.5% of them did not find any changes. In the unemployed and forest worker category cent percentage of them find a change in the livelihood for the last 10 years. An overall inference from that table is that 85% of the tribal community responded a change in the livelihood pattern during the last 10 years and only 15% of them did not find any change in their livelihood. So, it can be concluded that there is a change in the tribal livelihood for the last 10 years as per the data.

Table no. III. Current Livelihood strategies

Livelihood	Frequency	percentage
Unemployed	8	13.3
Wage labourer	14	23.3
Farmer	8	13.3
Student	20	33.3
Private employee	2	3.3
Government employee	6	10.0
Home maker	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0

Note: the above table shows the present status of tribes in the study in terms of their livelihood. From table no.1, it can be seen that majority of the respondents comes under the age group 18-28, that is 85.1% of the total respondents. Here, 33.3% of the respondents are students followed by wage labourer (23.3%), unemployed and farmer (13.3%), government employed (10%), private employee and home maker (3.3%). So, it is directly evident that there is a change in the present status of livelihood. From table no. 2, it is evident that the percentage of those who depends on agriculture is 81.6% and from the above table, it showed a reduced percentage of farmers to 13.3%. The percentage of the unemployed has an increase. But by comparing both table no.2 and table no.3, it is evident that there is diversification in livelihood from majority depended on agriculture to other livelihood practices. People of tribal communities engaged in other areas of livelihood practices thus induced income generation.

Table no. IV. Areas of changes

Areas of changes	Yes	No	Total
Financial changes	25	5	30
Educational changes	9	0	9
Social changes	5	2	7
Cultural changes	0	0	0
All the above	12	2	14
Total	51	9	60

Note: The table shows the response of tribes with respect to the area that impacted the livelihood changes. Majority of them responded that the financial changes were impacted due to diversification in livelihood.

Changes occurred are of two dimensions (a) positive changes which improved their financial security (b) negative changes which reduced their income.

Policy implications

It is a common understanding that promoting livelihood diversification is same as that of supporting the poor considering the idea that diversification leads to improvement in income. Tribal population depends on forest or agriculture related practices for their living. The livelihood diversification among the tribal population can be rise by encouraging non-farm or off-farm practices and unskilled labor as it does improve the income but at the same time the question is that does it reduce exposure to household risk or uncertainty. Considering risk exposure is also as important as increasing income to ensure sustainability. It is a fact that explicit efforts to reach marginalized populations are absent in the process of policy making. Stimulus to improve the non-farm practices will benefit those who possess certain assets like education, savings, skills etc. so they need to take advantage of the market opportunities available to them. If people lack these assets, govt need to make steps to improve the same considering the future of the marginalized population.

Conclusion

Livelihood diversification challenges the traditional view of poverty reduction among marginalized population. For many, agriculture or forest-based activities failed to provide with sufficient livelihood benefits for years and thus made them pursue alternative livelihood sources. Low income and higher risk or uncertainty are associated with agriculture or forest-based activities while diverse rural livelihood is attributed by mobility, migration, adaptability and flexibility which are often ignored by policy makers.

Reference

- Conway, R. C. (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*. UK: Institute of development studies. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248535825_Sustainable_rural_livelihoods_practical_concepts_for_the_21st_century
- Ellis, F. (1998). Household strategies and rural livelihood. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 1-38. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220389808422553>
- Gogoi, M. D. (2020). AGRICULTURAL INTENSIFICATION, DIVERSIFICATION AND MIGRATIONAS LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES AMONG RURAL SCHEDULED TRIBEPOPULATION OF PALASBARI REVENUE CIRCLE: A CASE OF INDIA. *Asian Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development*, 598-611. doi:<https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.ajard.2020.102.598.611>
- Oluwakemi, A. A. (2013). Livelihood diversification and welfare of rural households in Ondo State, Nigeria. *DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS*, 482-489. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5897/JDAE2013.0497>
- Reardon, T. (1997). Using Evidence of Household Income Diversification to. *World Development*, 735-747. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(96\)00137-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(96)00137-4)

