

International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 9; Issue 2; February 2026; Page No. 444-447

Received: 26-12-2025
Accepted: 29-01-2026

Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal

An analysis of profile characteristics of tribal women in farm and home management in Kanniyakumari district

¹M Sharmi, ²V Balamurugan and ³M Natarajan

¹PG Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India

³Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2026.v9.i2f.3212>

Corresponding Author: M Sharmi

Abstract

Tribal women constitute an integral part of India's agrarian and socio-cultural fabric, particularly in rural and forest-based regions where agriculture and allied activities remain the primary livelihood. Despite their substantial contribution to farm and home management, tribal women often remain socially and economically marginalized due to limited access to education, resources, extension services and decision-making platforms. The present study was undertaken to examine the profile characteristics of tribal women in farm and home management, with special reference to the Kani tribal community of Kanniyakumari district, Tamil Nadu. An ex-post-facto research design was adopted for the study. Kanniyakumari district was purposively selected owing to the predominance of the Kani tribe and Thiruvattar block was chosen as it recorded the highest concentration of tribal women. A total sample of 120 tribal women respondents was selected from six villages using proportionate random sampling. Data were collected through a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule. The findings revealed that half of the respondents belonged to the middle-aged group, the majority lived in nuclear families with medium family size and most had education up to middle school level. Agriculture was the primary occupation for a large proportion of respondents, with small farm holdings and low annual income. Most women had medium farming experience, moderate social participation, low extension agency contact and medium levels of livestock possession and cosmopolitanism. Fatalism was found to be relatively high among the respondents. Tribal women devoted substantial time to household, farm and off-farm activities, while participation in social activities was minimal. Decision-making was largely undertaken jointly with spouses in both farm and home management. The study concludes that enhancing education, farming experience, decision-making capacity and access to productive resources can substantially strengthen the role of tribal women in farm and home management, thereby contributing to their empowerment and sustainable rural development.

Keywords: Tribal women, kani tribe, Kanniyakumari, farm and home management

1. Introduction

India is home to a rich cultural and heritage legacy of tribal communities. Approximately 90.00 per cent of the tribal population resides in rural areas, while 10.00 per cent live in urban regions. These communities are distinct in their languages, cultures, geographical settings and maintain an independent way of life along with a unique social structure. Agriculture in India is the backbone of the country and it plays an important role in the economy, is regarded as the largest sector of the country's economic activity. Above 80.00 per cent of the Indian population, either directly or indirectly depends on agriculture (Kumar and Saranya, 2019) ^[5]. Tribal women play a significant role in shaping their social, cultural and religious practices. Women are the driving force behind development programs, whether in developed or developing nations. In every part of the country, women in the family are responsible for caring for both children and the elderly. International studies have

shown that significant changes in a society's financial and political infrastructure occur when women actively participate in helping their families navigate new challenges and realities. However, the majority of tribal women have limited access to modern farming technologies and related resources. Despite their active involvement in farm and home management, they remain marginalized due to traditional values, illiteracy, social issues and other barriers. Tribal women in India face numerous social, economic and cultural challenges that hinder their overall development and participation in society. They face many issues such as poor living conditions, low levels of education and widespread exposure to gender-based violence and discrimination. Although tribal women constitute nearly half of the tribal population, they continue to struggle for equal access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare and legal protections. These systemic barriers prevent them from fully contributing to and benefiting from national development

(Banerjee, 2024) ^[1]. In Tamil Nadu, nearly 50.00 per cent of the tribal population are illiterate. Among the literate groups, women constitute more percentage compared to men. This shows the positive turn towards the efforts on tribal women education (Selvi, 2021) ^[11].

Once a nomadic tribe, the community has now settled in one place, with agriculture as their principal occupation. Apart from agriculture, the Kani tribes collected honey from the forest regions and cultivated other minor forest produce. This helped them in earning some money to cater for their needs.

The Kani speak a dialect that is similar to the Dravidian language of Malayalam. There is no script for Kani. In addition to speaking their native dialect, they also have proficiency in Tamil and Malayalam. Words from Tamil and Malayalam are prominent in their language. They write in Tamil and Malayalam script. Like other rural women, tribal women play important role in agriculture and home management. No field operation is beyond the reach of tribal women in tribal areas. Keeping this fact in view the study was undertaken with the following objectives. The objectives of the study was,

1. To study the profile characteristics of tribal women.

2. Research Methodology

Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu was purposively selected for the study considering the following reasons:

Kanikkar is one of the 36 tribes listed in the Gazette of India. The Kani tribes are primarily found in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. They live in the Western Ghats of southern Tamil Nadu and commonly known as Kanis. The investigator was familiar with the local language, which would help to build up quick rapport and also enable in-depth study combined with personal observation. Kanniyakumari district has thirteen blocks viz., Agastheeswaram, Rajakkamangalam, Thovalai, Kurunthancode, Thuckalay, Thiruvattar, Killiyoor, Munchirai, Melpuram, Nagercoil Municipality, Padmanabhapuram Municipality, Colachel Municipality and Kuzhithurai Municipality. Among them Thiruvattar block was selected for the study since the block occupies the highest percentage of Tribal women. A sample size of 120 respondents was fixed for this study considering the limitations of time and other resources. Tribal women were respondents for the present study. Tribal women were selected from each of the six villages of selected block. A sample size of 120 respondents was selected from the six villages by using proportionate random sampling. An Ex-post-facto research design was adopted for the study. The data were collected from the respondents with the help of a well-structured and pre tested interview schedule.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The profile characteristics among the Tribal Women

Table 1: Distribution of the profile characteristics among the Tribal Women. (n=120)

S. No.	Category	Number	Percent
1. Age			
1	Young (Below 35 years)	21	17.50
2	Middle (36 to 45 years)	60	50.00
3	Old (Above 45 years)	39	32.50
2. Educational Status			
1	Illiterate	12	10.00
2	Functionally literate	10	8.33
3	Primary education	28	23.33
4	Middle school education	36	30.00
5	Secondary education	26	21.67
6	Collegiate	8	6.67
3. Occupational status			
1	Agriculture as primary occupation	96	80.00
2	Agriculture as secondary occupation	24	20.00
4. Family type			
1	Nuclear family	45	37.50
2	Joint Family	75	62.50
5. Family size			
1	Small	33	27.50
2	Medium	66	55.00
3	Big	21	17.50
6. Farm size			
1	Marginal	45	37.50
2	Small	57	47.50
3	Big	18	15.00
7. Annual income			
1	Low	72	60.00
2	Medium	36	30.00
3	High	12	10.00
8. Farming experience			
1	Low	36	30.00
2	Medium	60	50.00
3	High	24	20.00

9. Social participation			
1	Low	45	37.50
2	Medium	51	42.50
3	High	24	20.00
10. Extension agency contact			
1	Low	48	40.00
2	Medium	45	37.50
3	High	27	22.50
11. Livestock possession			
1	Low	23	19.17
2	Medium	62	51.66
3	High	35	29.17
12. Cosmopolitaness			
1	Low	42	35.00
2	Medium	60	50.00
3	High	18	15.00
13. Fatalism			
1	Low	30	25.00
2	Medium	39	32.50
3	High	51	42.50

Time management

S. No.	Hours	Household activities		Farm activities		Off-Farm activities		Social activities	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	8	20	16.66	18	15.00	-	-	-	-
2	7	25	20.83	31	25.83	-	-	5	4.17
3	6	40	33.33	22	18.33	10	8.33	2	1.67
4	5	20	16.67	13	10.83	22	18.33	-	-
5	4	10	8.33	17	14.17	18	15.00	-	-
6	3	5	4.17	6	5.00	27	22.50	-	-
7	2	-	-	8	6.67	23	19.16	15	12.50
8	1	-	-	5	4.17	20	16.66	7	5.83

Decision making ability

S. No.	Decision-making areas	Decision taken						Total
		Individual		Jointly with spouse		Consulting all the family members		
		N	%	N	%	N		
I	Farm Management							
1	Agriculture	26	21.67	70	58.33	24	20.00	100.00
2	Animal Husbandry	20	16.67	65	54.17	35	29.17	100.00
3	Farm forestry	25	20.83	62	51.67	33	27.50	100.00
II	Home Management							
1	Food related activities	38	31.67	54	45.00	28	23.33	100.00
2	Child related activities	66	55.00	41	34.17	13	10.83	100.00
3	Household activities	93	77.50	20	16.67	7	5.83	100.00
4	Role in social activities	6	5.00	96	80.00	18	15.00	100.00
5	Estimating expenses	18	15.00	66	55.00	36	30.00	100.00

The distribution of tribal women according to their profile characteristics revealed that half of the respondents (50.00 per cent) belonged to the middle age group (36–45 years), followed by old (32.50 per cent) and young (17.50 per cent). With regard to educational status, 30.00 per cent had middle school education, 23.33 per cent had primary education and 21.67 per cent had secondary education, while 10.00 per cent were illiterate, 8.33 per cent were functionally literate and 6.67 per cent had collegiate education. Majority of the respondents (80.00 per cent) were engaged in agriculture as their primary occupation and 20.00 per cent as their secondary occupation. More than half (62.50 per cent) belonged to joint families and 37.50 per cent to nuclear families, with 55.00 per cent having medium family size, followed by small (27.50 per cent) and big (17.50 per cent)

families. Regarding farm size, 47.50 per cent were small farmers, 37.50 per cent were marginal farmers and 15.00 per cent were big farmers. A majority (60.00 per cent) fell under the low annual income category, while 30.00 per cent and 10.00 per cent belonged to medium and high income groups respectively. Half of the respondents (50.00 per cent) had medium farming experience, followed by low (30.00 per cent) and high (20.00 per cent). In terms of social participation, 42.50 per cent had medium level, 37.50 per cent low level and 20.00 per cent high level. Extension agency contact was low among 40.00 per cent, medium among 37.50 per cent and high among 22.50 per cent. More than half (51.66 per cent) had medium livestock possession, while 29.17 per cent had high and 19.17 per cent had low possession. With respect to cosmopolitaness, 50.00 per cent

had medium level, followed by low (35.00 per cent) and high (15.00 per cent). Regarding fatalism, 42.50 per cent exhibited high level, 32.50 per cent medium and 25.00 per cent low level. Time management analysis indicated that respondents spent comparatively more hours in household and farm activities than in off-farm and social activities. The decision-making pattern revealed that most farm management decisions were taken jointly with spouse, whereas home management decisions, particularly household and child-related activities, were largely taken independently by the respondents.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The profile characteristics of the tribal women revealed that half (50.00 per cent) of the respondents belonged to the middle-aged group, while the majority (62.50 per cent) lived in nuclear families and over half (55.00 per cent) had medium-sized families. Regarding education, nearly one-third (30.00 per cent) had studied upto middle school and majority (80.00 per cent) reported agriculture as their primary occupation. In terms of landholding, 47.50 per cent were small farmers and most of the respondents (60.00 per cent) had low levels of annual income and half (50.00 per cent) had medium level farming experience. Social participation was moderate in 42.50 per cent of the women, while 40.00 per cent had low contact with extension agencies. Livestock possession was medium among 51.66 per cent of the respondents. Similarly, 50.00 per cent exhibited a medium degree of cosmopolitaness. Fatalism were high in 42.50 per cent of the women. In terms of time allocation, 33.33 per cent spent up to 6 hours per day on household activities, while 25.83 per cent spent a maximum of 7 hours on farm activities and 22.50 per cent spent 6 hours on off-farm work. Only a small proportion (1.67 per cent to 12.50 per cent) engaged in social activities for 1 to 7 hours. Notably, a majority of the women actively participated in joint decision-making with their spouses in both farm and home management.

References

1. Banerjee R. Position of tribal women in India. *International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation*. 2024;6(3):868-879.
2. Bora MB, Deka MB, Borah SB. Characterization of participation pattern of tribal women in house, farm and allied areas. *Asian Journal of Home Science*. 2018;13(1):417-422.
3. Dhruw B, Kaushal R, Bhagat R, Atree N. Tribal women participation in agriculture and allied sectors in Gariaband district of Chhattisgarh. *International Journal of Research*. 2020;8(9):334-344.
4. Kiran CH, Minaxi B, Sandip K. Socio-economic profile of tribal farm women and its relationship towards involvement in agriculture practices in Chhotadepur district of Gujarat state. *Journal of Krishi Vigyan*. 2018;7:139-143.
5. Kumar H, Saranya H. A study on participation of farm tribal women in agriculture. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 2019;24(5):60-64.
6. Mohanta. Participation of tribal women in agriculture. *International Journal of Science, Environment and Technology*. 2017;6(1):745-750.
7. Nath RK, Brahma S, Sarma R, Ahmed PA. Study on participation of rural tribal women farmers in horticulture and household activities in Assam. *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*. 2020;11(5):35651-35653.
8. Patel RM, Patel A, Desai DJ, Patel VB. Social participation of tribal farm women and its relationship with their contribution in agriculture and animal husbandry. *International Journal of Informational Research Review*. 2016;3(7):2593-2595.
9. Patel V, Chauhan NM. Role performance of tribal farm women in livelihood dealings. *International Journal in Management and Social Science*. 2015;3(11):256-265.
10. Pratibha M. Participation of tribal farm women in decision making process related to farm and home activities in Southern Rajasthan [doctoral dissertation]. Udaipur: MPUAT; 2024.
11. Selvi VK. Status of tribal women in Tamil Nadu, India. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*. 2021;10(1):16-21.
12. Shamna AP, Biswas P, Jha SK, Sarkar S, Kumar S. Tribal farm women's participation in agriculture and factors influencing it: Evidence from West Bengal, India. *Journal of Agricultural Science and Technology*. 2018;20(5):911-922.
13. Sujeetha TN, Anamica M, Balarubini M. Socio-economic characteristics of self help group tribal women in Nilgiris district, India. *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*. 2017;6(11):3988-3991.
14. Sujeetha TN. Role performance of tribal women in farm and home management – An exploratory study. Coimbatore: AC and RI, TNAU; 2015.
15. Vaibhav H, Basunathe VK. Decision making pattern of tribal women in dairy enterprise in Melghat region of Amravati district. *Indian Research Journal of Extension Education*. 2015;15(4):10-15.