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An impact of Uzhavar Sandhai (farmer's market) on livelihood empowerment on farmers in Trichy District, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

In India 20 percent of the villagers depend solely upon agricultural income for their livelihood directly. The Government of Tamil Nadu introduced "uzhavar sandhai" in 1999. It is to provide fresh vegetables and fruits to consumers at reasonable price daily without any intervention of middlemen. There are eight uzhavar sandhai present in Trichy district. This study is to identify impact of farmers towards livelihood empowerment in the uzhavar sandhai. Distance to the market, mode of transportation, monthly income, assistance received, problems faced in the market, expectations and suggestions showed a significant relationship with livelihood empowerment. These findings address operational barriers and enhancing support systems to strengthen the role of uzhavar sandhai in promoting sustainable and empowered livelihood of farmers.

Keywords: Producer, consumer, livelihood and socio economic condition

1. Introduction

Almost 60-70 percent of the rural population in India depends on agriculture and allied activities, as it supports millions of families for earning their livelihood. Agricultural development is a continuous process which in the long run depends on the marketing of agricultural produce in an organized manner to benefit both the farmers and the consumers.

Direct marketing by farmers is being encouraged as an innovative channel. Some examples of these channels are Apni Mandi, Rythu Bazars and Uzhavar Sandis. These channels are mostly adopted in sales transactions of agricultural commodities like fruits, vegetables and flowers, which are highly perishable. In this channel, the produce moves quickly from farmers to consumers due to lack of middlemen.

Uzhavar Sandhai had its birth in the concept of Kal Ghaj in Russia. The former Union agriculture secretary, MS Gill on his visit to this country was impressed by this concept of farmers' market and he replicated this concept by initiating Apni Mandis in Punjab and Haryana in early 1987.

The Government of Tamil Nadu introduced this new concept of agricultural marketing for vegetables and fruits, namely "Uzhavar Sandhai" in 1999. Uzhavar Sandhai are maintained by the District Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee of the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Agribusiness. Presently there are more than 141 Uzhavar Sandhai working in different parts of the state Tamil Nadu.

The objectives of the study includes

- To study the Socio-economic profile and farmers classification who participated in Uzhavar Sandhai.
- To analyze the impact of Uzhavar Sandhai on livelihood empowerment of farmers.

2. Material and Methods

Research design constitutes the blue print of collection, measures and analysis of data. The study is based on the primary and the secondary data. The process of selection of sample was purposive random sampling. The primary data are the data that are collected afresh for the first time and that is original in nature. Secondary data here have been collected from newspapers, magazines, websites, and general discussions with local municipal government officials. Samples were collected from producers (80 Members) and buyers (80 Members) in whom the total sample size of respondents is 160. For the purpose of the survey, a structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the consumers and buyers to study the objectives.

For achieving the impact of Uzhavar Sandhai on livelihood empowerment of farmers, the livelihood security is calculated by using Multiple linear regression. It helps to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between each explanatory variable and the Livelihood Security Index. The formula is:

$$LSI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_n X_n + \varepsilon$$

Where,

LSI - Livelihood security index

$X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n$ - Explanatory variables

β_0 - Intercept

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$ - Coefficients

ε - Error term

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Simple percentage analysis

Simple percentage analysis is used to find out the proportion of respondents who are satisfied, neutral or dissatisfied with different aspects of uzhavar sandhai. In this study, data was collected from 80 respondents. The attributes studied include marital status, gender, membership status, profit, distance, type of family, source of irrigation, mode of awareness, transport, education, challenge, kind of assistance, benefit, disposal of waste, nature and type of land holding, category of farmer, age, expectation and purchase for sales.

Table 1 show that, the majority of producers 62.50 percent is in the age group of 41-60 years, indicating that middle-aged individuals dominate the production activities. Younger producers (21-40 years) account for only 13.75 percent, suggesting that farming may not be attracting enough youth. Older farmers above 60 years represent 28.75 percent, which points possible future labour shortages if generational replacement does not occur.

Table 1: Age of the producer

Age	Number of persons	Percentage (%)
21 – 40	11	13.75
41 – 60	50	62.50
Above 60	23	28.75
Total	80	100

As shown in Table 2, almost all producers 98.75 percent are married. This may reflect the cultural and social norms of rural communities and also suggests the involvement of family members in farming activities.

Table 2: Marital status of the producer

Marital status	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Married	79	98.75
Unmarried	01	1.25
Total	80	100

Table 3 indicates that 62.50 percent of the producers are female, highlighting the strong role of women in agricultural production and marketing. This gender distribution underscores the importance of gender-sensitive agricultural policies and training programs.

Table 3: Gender of the producer

Gender	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Female	50	62.50
Male	30	37.50
Total	80	100

Table 4 reveals that, most producers have a long association with their respective groups or organizations, with 38.75 percent having 11-20 years of membership and 25 percent having 21-25 years. This stability suggests trust and sustained

participation, although only 1.25 percent are relatively new members (<1 year), which may point to slow membership growth.

Table 4: Membership status of the producer

Range	Respondents	Percentage (%)
< 1 Year	1	1.25
1-5 Years	16	20.00
6-10 Years	12	15.00
11-20 Years	31	38.75
21-25 Years	20	25.00
Total	80	100

Table 5 shows a wide variation in profit levels. A significant proportion 26.25 percent earn less than Rs.10,000, while only 2.50 percent earn above Rs.1,00,000. The concentration of producers in the lower- and middle-income categories suggests that while farming provides livelihood security, high profitability remains limited.

Table 5: Profit obtained by the producer

Profit	Respondents	Percentage (%)
<10000	21	26.25
10000-20000	14	17.50
20000-30000	11	13.75
30000-40000	8	10.00
40000-50000	10	12.50
50000-60000	4	5.00
60000-70000	7	8.75
70000-90000	3	3.75
>100000	2	2.50
Total	80	100

As per Table 6, most producers are small farmers 46.25 percent or marginal farmers 27.50 percent. Leased land is used by 21.25 percent of producers, while semi-medium landholders are rare 5 percent. This smallholding dominance may limit economies of scale but encourages intensive cultivation practices.

Table 6: Land holding of the producer

Land holding	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Marginal	22	27.50
Leased land	17	21.25
Semi medium	4	5.00
Small	37	46.25
Total	80	100

Table 7 shows that, 78.75 percent of producers are owner-cultivators, while 21.25 entirely on leased land, indicating a blend of traditional ownership and tenancy-based farming.

Table 7: Nature of land holding

Nature of land holding	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Owner	63	78.75
Leased land	17	21.25
Total	80	100

Table 8 highlights that, vegetables dominate the product category 78.75 percent, followed by fruits 10 percent, food items 8.75 percent and flowers 2.50 percent. This reflects a focus on perishable and high-demand commodities.

Table 8: Kind of product sold

Kind of product sold	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Vegetables	63	78.75
Fruits	8	10.00
Flowers	2	2.50
Food	7	8.75
Total	80	100

Table 9 reveals that over half the producers 52.50 percent travel 1-10 km to the market, indicating accessibility. However, a small segment 2.50 percent travels more than 50 km, potentially incurring higher transport costs.

Table 9: Distance from Uzhavar Sandhai

Range	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1-10 Km	42	52.50
11-20 Km	16	20.00
21-30 Km	8	10.00
31-40 Km	9	11.25
41-50 Km	3	3.75
51-60 Km	2	2.50
Total	80	100

Tables 10 shows that, most families have 3-5 members 68.75 percent followed by less than 3 members 17.50 percent then more than 5 members 13.75 percent. This suggests reduced availability of family labour compared to traditional joint family setups.

Table 10: Size of family

Range	Respondents	Percentage (%)
< 3	14	17.50
3 to 5	55	68.75
> 5	11	13.75
Total	80	100

Tables 11 show that, nuclear families dominate 76.25 percent than joint families 23.75 percent. This suggests reduced availability of family labour compared to traditional joint family setups.

Table 11: Type of family

Type of family	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Joint	19	23.75
Nuclear	61	76.25
Total	80	100

Table 12 reveals that, open wells are the primary source 55 percent followed by bore wells 26.25 percent. Surprisingly,

18.75 percent report having no irrigation facilities and they are highly dependent on rainfall.

Table 12: Source of irrigation

Source of irrigation	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Bore Well	21	26.25
Open well	44	55.00
NIL	15	18.75
Total	80	100

Table 13 indicates that buses are the primary transport mode 73.75 percent, reflecting dependence on public transport. Only 11.25 percent use their own vehicles, which could limit flexibility in marketing.

Table 13: Mode of transport

Vehicle	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Bus	59	73.75
Own vehicle	9	11.25
Tempo	2	2.50
Travels from Ooty	2	2.50
Truck	8	10.00
Total	80	100

As per Table 14 composting 55 percent is the most common waste disposal method, followed by using waste as cattle feed 27.50 percent. A small portion 3.75 percent leaves waste unmanaged, highlighting a need for improved waste management practices.

Table 14: Disposal of waste

Disposal of waste	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Cattle feed	22	27.50
composting unit	44	55.00
NIL	3	3.75
Waste lorry	11	13.75
Total	80	100

Table 15 shows that most participants are individual farmers 82.50 percent, followed by self-help group (SHG) members 15 percent. Cooperative and volunteer representation is negligible.

Table 15: Category of farmer

Category of farmer	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Farmer	66	82.5
SHG	12	15.00
Cooperative	1	1.25
Volunteer	1	1.25
Total	80	100

Table 16 reveals that relatives 36.25 percent are the main source of awareness, followed by agricultural officers 30 percent. This reliance on personal networks suggests that formal information dissemination is less effective than interpersonal communication.

Table 16: Mode of awareness

Mode of awareness	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agriculture officer	24	30.00
Chief minister announcement	2	2.50
Cooperative	1	1.25
District collector	2	2.50
Newspaper	4	5.00
Panchayat announcement	5	6.25
Relatives	29	36.25
TV	10	12.50
SHG	3	3.75
Total	80	100

Table 17 shows that 41.25 percent have education below fifth grade and only 6.25 percent hold a degree. This low educational profile could affect adoption of modern agricultural practices.

Table 17: Educational status of the producer

Educational status	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below fifth grade	33	41.25
Fifth grade and above	18	22.50
Higher secondary school	24	30.00
Degree	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Table 18 shows that most producers 46.25 percent earn between Rs.61,000-80,000 annually, with 18.75 percent earning over Rs.1,00,000. However, 10 percent earn less than Rs.40,000, highlighting economic disparity among producers.

Table 18: Income of the producer

Range	Respondents	Percentage (%)
10000-40000	8	10.00
41000-60000	12	15.00
61000-80000	37	46.25
81000-100000	18	22.50
>100000	15	18.75
Total	80	100

As per Table 19 free transport facilities 35 percent and shop allotments 32.50 percent are the most common benefits received. Fewer producers have access to free weighing machines 17.50 percent or basic amenities like drinking water and toilets 15 percent.

Table 19: Benefits for the producer

Benefits	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Shop allotment	26	32.50
Free weighing machine	14	17.50
Free transport facility	28	35.00
Drinking water and toilet facility	12	15.00
Total	80	100

Table 20 indicates that the most common challenge is selling goods free of cost under certain circumstances 46.25 percent followed by bargaining pressure 28.75 percent and lending issues 25 percent.

Table 20: Challenges faced by the producer

Challenges	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Bargaining	23	28.75
Free of cost	37	46.25
Lending	20	25.00
Total	80	100

Table 21 shows that transport support is the most significant assistance 65 percent, followed by storage facilities 21.25 percent. Limited shop facilities 6.25 percent indicate scope for infrastructure improvement.

Table 21: Kind of assistance

Kind of assistance	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Shop Facility	5	6.25
Storage facility	17	21.25
Support to sale	6	7.50
Transport	52	65.00
Total	80	100

Table 22 reveals that, 63.75 percent sell only what they cultivate, while 22.50 percent sell purchased produce. This suggests that most producers are direct growers, ensuring better quality control.

Table 22: Purchase vegetables for sales

Purchase vegetable for sales	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Cultivated	51	63.75
Cultivated and purchased	11	13.75
Purchased	18	22.50
Total	80	100

Table 23 shows that, infrastructure improvement 33.75 percent and cleanliness 27.50 percent are top expectations, followed by increased shop numbers 22.50 percent and cold storage facilities 16.25 percent. These reflect a strong demand for better market facilities and hygiene standards.

Table 23: Expectations of the producer

Expectations	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Infrastructure improvement	27	33.75
Cold storage Facility	13	16.25
Cleanliness	22	27.50
Increasing the shop	18	22.50
Total	80	100

1.2 Socio-economic profile of consumer

Table 24 it is clear that about 60 percent of the respondents belong to the age group 41 to 59 years while 22.50 percent belong to 21 to 40 years and only 17.50 percent belong to the above 60 years. So, it is well clear that most of consumers who are bought their commodity here are those who have their age in between 41 to 60.

Table 24: Age of the consumer

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21 to 40	18	22.50
41 to 60	48	60.00
>60	14	17.50
Total	80	100

Table 25 shows that about 82.50 percent among the respondents were male and 17.50 percent were female. Thus, it can be interpreted that male constitute most among the respondents.

Table 25: Gender of the consumer

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	66	82.50
Female	14	17.50
Total	80	100

Table 26, we can clearly understand that there were 46.25 percent of the consumers are degree holders, 30 percent of the consumers are 5th to 9th grade, 16.25 percent of the consumers are SSLC and 7.50 percent of the consumers are below 5th grade. Most of the consumers had received basic education level.

Table 26: Educational qualification of the consumer

Educational status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 5 th grade	6	7.50
5 th to 9 th grade	24	30.00
SSLC	13	16.25
Degree	31	46.25
Total	80	100

Table 27 shows that about 43.75 percent of the consumers are receiving an income below 10000. About 17.50 percent of the consumers fall between Rs. 11000 to 20000 and Rs. 41000 to 50000. Among the remaining 12.50 percent comes between Rs.31000 to 40000 and 8.75 percent comes Rs. 21000 to 30000. From this we can understand that those who receive remunerative prices below 10000 are very large and those who receives remunerative price Rs. 21000 to 30000 are very low.

Table 27: Monthly income of the consumer

Monthly income (Rs.)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 10000	35	43.75
11000 to 20000	14	17.50
21000 to 30000	7	8.75
31000 to 40000	10	12.50
41000 to 50000	14	17.50
Total	80	100

Table 28 shows that, 98.75 percent of the consumers are married whereas remaining 1.75 percent of the consumers are unmarried. From this we can understand that most of the consumers are married.

Table 28: Marital status of the consumer

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	79	98.75
Unmarried	1	1.25
Total	80	100

Table 29, we can understand that 33.75 percent of the consumers suggested Reason for purchase is low price and freshness. Among the remaining 32.50 percent of the

consumers suggested reason for purchase is good quality. From this we can understand that most of the consumers are preferred or purchase is low price and freshness.

Table 29: Reason for purchase

Reason for purchase	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low price	27	33.75
Good quality	26	32.50
Freshness	27	33.75
Total	80	100

Table 30 shows that, we can understand that 53.75 percent of consumers are known the information through friends and relatives, 18.75 percent of the consumers through TV and Radio, 13.75 percent of the consumers through Newspaper, 7.50 percent of consumers through Panchayat, 6.25 percent of the consumers through Agriculture office. Most of the consumers knew about the information through friends and relatives.

Table 30: Source of information

Source of information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Friends and relatives	43	53.75
Panchayat	6	7.50
Agriculture office	5	6.25
TV and radio	15	18.75
Newspaper	11	13.75
Total	80	100

Table 31 shows that, 93.75 percent of the consumers can get good quality of commodity and remaining 6.25 percent of consumers can get poor quality of commodity. From this we can understand that most of the consumers are get the good quality of commodity.

Table 31: Quality of commodity

Quality of commodity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good quality	75	93.75
Poor quality	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Table 32, shows that, 91.25 percent of the consumers can get sufficient quantity of commodity and remaining 8.75 percent of consumers not get enough quantity of commodity. From this we can understand that most of the consumers are get sufficient quantity of commodity.

Table 32: Quantity of commodity

Quantity of the commodity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	73	91.25
No	7	8.75
Total	80	100

Table 33 shows that, 68.75 percent of the consumers are purchased the country vegetables, 12.50 percent of the consumers are purchased the English vegetables and greens and the remaining 6.25 percent of the consumers are purchased the fruits. From this above table we can understand that most of the consumers are purchased the country vegetables.

Table 33: Variety of commodity

Variety of commodity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Country vegetables	55	68.75
English vegetables	10	12.50
Greens	10	12.50
Fruits	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Table 34 shows that 65 percent of the consumers are around 1 to 5 km distance from the market, 17.50 percent of the consumers are around 6 to 10 km distance from the market, 12.50 percent of the consumers are around less than 1 km distance from the market, 5 percent of the consumers are around 11 to 15 km distance from the market. Most of the consumers are around less than 1 to 5 km distance from the market.

Table 34: Distance from the market

Distance from the market	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 KM	10	12.50
1 to 5 KM	52	65.00
6 to 10 KM	14	17.50
11 to 15 KM	4	5.00
Total	80	100

Table 36: Livelihood security of the farmers in Uzhavar Sandhai

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	12.805	55.573	0.000	0.230	0.818
Age	-0.793	5.473	-0.016	-0.145	0.885
Marital status	-21.019	20.296	-0.101	-1.036	0.304
Gender	-3.262	5.358	-0.068	-0.609	0.545
Educational qualification	0.506	2.138	0.028	0.237	0.814
Distance	6.443	2.137	0.072	1.625	0.109
Monthly income	4.025	3.444	0.123	1.169	0.247
Kinds of vegetables or fruits	0.747	3.280	0.065	0.533	0.596
Mode of transportation	8.656	5.398	0.277	1.604	0.114
Assistance	4.223	2.267	0.020	0.132	0.895
Problems	8.417	19.677	0.040	0.428	0.670
Expectation and suggestion	4.697	2.987	0.032	0.261	0.595
Reasons for selling products	-3.070	7.342	-0.043	-0.418	0.677
Category of sellers	-4.849	6.677	-0.109	-0.726	0.470
Cultivated or purchased vegetables	-4.237	7.296	-0.089	-0.581	0.563

Distance to the market, mode of transportation, monthly income, assistance received, problems faced in the market and expectations and suggestions showed a significant relationship with livelihood empowerment. The significance of distance and mode of transportation indicates that accessibility and logistical convenience play a critical role in farmers' ability to benefit from the market. The positive association of monthly income and assistance highlights the economic and institutional support as key contributors to improved livelihood outcomes.

The significance of problems and expectations suggests that challenges within the uzhavar sandhai system, along with farmers' aspirations for improvement, directly influence their perception of empowerment and satisfaction. These findings underline the importance of addressing operational barriers and enhancing support systems to strengthen the role of uzhavar sandhai in promoting sustainable and empowered livelihood or farmers.

Table 35 shows that 90 percent of the consumers had no problem in the market. 8.75 percent of consumers had parking problem and remaining 1.25 percent had problem on timing. Most of the consumers had no problem in the Market.

Table 35: Challenges of the consumer

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parking space	7	8.75
Time	1	1.25
No problem	72	90.00
Total	80	100

2.3 Livelihood empowerment on farmers

In order to study the nature of relationship between the selected independent variables and livelihood security of the farmers in uzhavar sandhai, regression analysis was computed and the values are presented in Table 36. The values of regression coefficients were then tested for their statistical significance. The scale of indicator ranged from 1 to 5.

Age, marital status, gender, educational qualification, type of vegetables and fruits sold, reason for selling products, category of sellers and whether the produce was cultivated or purchased did not exhibit a meaningful association with livelihood empowerment. The non significance suggests that these factors do not substantially affect the extent to which farmers feel empowered through their participation in uzhavar sandhai. This may suggest that the advantages offered by the scheme are distributed fairly uniformly among farmers from different demographic backgrounds, irrespective of their personal characteristics or the type of produce they sell.

Conclusion

The socio-economic profile of producers revealed that most were in the middle age group (41-60 years), married and largely women, reflecting the significant role of female farmers. The majority were small or marginal landholders

cultivating vegetables, with open wells serving as the primary irrigation source. Public transport, especially buses, was the most common means of commuting to the market. Earnings for many producers were modest, often below ₹20,000 showing that farming served more as livelihood support than a high-income activity. While provisions such as stall allotments and free transportation were beneficial, producers also faced problems with bargaining pressure and the need to sell under compulsion.

On the consumer side, most were male, middle-aged and moderately educated, belonging predominantly to lower-income groups (< Rs.10,000). Freshness, affordability and quality were the main reasons for shopping at the market and word-of-mouth through friends and relatives was the chief source of information. Although the system addressed both producer and consumer had issues like poor parking facilities and sanitation still required attention.

Regression analysis indicated that accessibility-related factors such as distance to the market and transport mode had significant influence on farmers' livelihood empowerment. Monthly income and institutional support also played a strong role, showing that economic and logistical backing improved farmer empowerment. Market-related challenges and farmers expectations were also determining factors. Demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status and education, no measurable effect, which suggests that Uzhavar Sandhai benefits farmers across different social categories in an inclusive way. Nevertheless, strengthening infrastructure and institutional support is crucial for sustaining long-term empowerment.

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