

# Tribal Development Initiatives and Indigenous Communities in Kerala: Addressing Challenges and Ensuring Inclusive Growth

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## Abstract

Kerala, located in southern India, is home to diverse indigenous communities with a rich cultural heritage. The state government and various organizations have placed significant emphasis on the development of these tribes, with a focus on tackling issues such as limited resources, socio-economic disparities, and geographical isolation. Despite these endeavors, persistent challenges remain. Sustained efforts are necessary to foster inclusive growth, promote sustainable development, and safeguard the unique cultural identity of tribal communities in Kerala. Ongoing commitment is required to enhance access to resources and bridge socio-economic gaps, thereby achieving comprehensive tribal development.

## Introduction

The word 'tribe' is generally used for a socially cohesive unit, associated with a territory, the member of which regards them as politically autonomous. Often a tribe possesses a distinct dialect and distinct cultural traits. Tribe can be defined as a “collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous though originally it might have been so”. According to R.N. Mukherjee, a tribe is that human group, whose members have common interest, territory, language, social law and economic occupation. Scheduled Tribes in India are generally considered as ‘Adivasis,’ means indigenous people or original inhabitants of the country (Sujatha A.K. et.al. 2021). The tribes have been confined to low status and are often physically and socially isolated instead of being absorbed in the mainstream Hindu population. Psychologically, the Scheduled Tribes often experience passive indifference that may take the form of exclusion from educational opportunities, social participation, and access to their own land. All tribal communities are not alike (Manoj Kumar 2018). They are the products of different historical and social conditions. They belong to different racial stocks and religious backgrounds and speak different dialects. Discrimination against women, occupational differentiation, and emphasis on status and hierarchical social ordering that characterize the predominant mainstream culture are generally absent among the tribal groups. Although Scheduled Tribes are a minority, they constitute about 8.2 % of the total population in India, or 85 million people in absolute number. The tribal population is an integral part of India’s social fabric (P.K. Vijayan et.al., 2020) and has the second largest concentration after that of the African continent. Introduction of Kerala as one of the 28 States of the Indian Union, which is the largest Democratic Republic

The term ‘Scheduled Tribe’ was first mentioned in the Constitution of India. Article 366(25) defines Scheduled tribe as “such tribe or tribal communities or parts of or groups with or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribe for the purpose of this Constitution”. Article 342 pointed out the procedure with regard to the matter of specification of Scheduled Tribes. For calling them as Scheduled Tribes, they should possess certain characteristics such as primitive traits, distinct culture, geographical isolation and economical backwardness and shy of contact with other communities (Mallick, 2014). Tribes are the original dwellers living in their area from unrecorded time and most aggressive settlers gradually drove them into forest. They are physically distinguishable and have darker skin and stout built physique. Their houses are made of thatched roof, mud, bamboo and bricks. Their houses are set in swampy valleys and plateaus (Indumathy et al., 2014)

India is the home to a large number of such indigenous people, who are still untouched by the way of life of the modern world (Darmawan, 2019). India has the largest population of the tribal people in the world. As per 2011 Census tribal population of India is 10.43 crores, i.e., 8.6% of total population, distributed in 30 States/Union Territories with 705 notified communities and most of them are seen in the Central and North Eastern areas of India. Among them 89.97% are living in rural areas and 10.03% are living in urban areas. There are no Scheduled Tribe population in 3 States of India such as Delhi NCR, Punjab and Haryana and 2 Union Territories such as Puducherry and Chandigarh.. Tribes in Kerala are the aboriginal population found in the southern Indian state. The scheduled tribes of Kerala have a unique, rich and varied culture of Indian tradition (Anumol Unnikrishnan 2020). Most of the tribes have their own traditions, language, customs, ritual practices, myths, arts and performances. As per 2011 Census, Kerala has 484839 tribal populations, i.e., 1.45% of total population with 37 tribal communities.

The various communities of adivasis of Kerala include Kurumas, Paniyas, Adiyas, Ooralis, Kurichyas, Kattunaikkans etc. During British era around 1940’s, migration took place to this region and the new settlers replaced these indigenous people. The Indian tribal society is a unique society with diversity of nature and people known for their extreme poverty. The tribes constitute the core of the poor. Poverty, poor health, illiteracy and other social problems among the tribes are exerting a dragging effect on the Indian economy. The tribes were turned to bonded labourers and led a life of extreme poverty and misery (Kulkarni, 1980). The makers of our constitution paid special attention towards these tribal problems and tried to eradicate it forever. Thus, the preamble of the Constitution provided certain measures for the protection and promotion of the interests of such deprived sections. The Five Year plans also formulated a series of investment-backed schemes and projects for the betterment of the conditions of the tribes living in the rural and urban areas (Singh, 1984).

Tribal development aims at increasing the income and strengthening the material aspects of tribal culture through better utilization of the environmental resources such as forests, minerals and all its flora & fauna. The question of tribal development is always seen as an agenda of Indian Economic Policy (Burman, 1989). They need tribal development in different areas such as economic, social and educational terms. Academicians and policy makers have given special attention to the same. Tribal sector of the economy has certain unique features. Based on the strategy of tribal development, the State Government and other Non-Government Institutions have been implementing a lot of legislative measures and programmes for the socio-economic transformation of the tribal communities. Thus, we can uplift them socially and economically.

## Statement of the Problem

Tribal community as an isolated group confines mostly to the forests or to other remote regions away from the common man. The developmental situation of tribes in Kerala face many challenges .To overcome this, many programmes were implemented through five year plans by the developmental institutions. Fifth plan onwards Tribal Sub Plan strategy was implemented to promote the development of scheduled tribes. Nowadays they are provided with various social, economical and educational facilities free of cost by both the Governmental and Non-Governmental Institutions. Even though they are given such grants and assistance by developmental institutions, they are still living in the backward state. Therefore, they should be uplifted through various empowerment programmes. The present study intends to discuss the role played by the various tribal developmental institutions for the upliftment of tribes of Kerala.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the reasons for selecting a tribal development institution by the tribes.
2. To assess the quality of services provided by tribal development institutions.

## Hypotheses of the Study

1. The reasons for selecting a particular tribal development institution is independent of the age and educational qualification of tribes.
2. The quality of services provided by tribal development institution is independent of the age and educational qualification of tribes.

## Result of ANOVA- H2c

H1a: The reason for selection of development institution is independent of the age group of tribes.

Table 1.1 shows the result of ANOVA of age group and the reasons for the selection of the institution by the tribes. The reasons such as the aims of the institution is very good, achieved tribal empowerment, better organisation to serve the need of the tribes, simple procedures and formalities, timely services by the institution, easy accessibility and familiarity of the institution are depending upon the age group of the tribes as the p-value is less than 0.01 or 0.05. Other reasons such as educate the tribes, reputation of the institution and concern for solving complaints are independent of the age group as the p-value is greater than 0.05 for such cases.

**Table 1.1 : Result of ANOVA- Age wise Analysis of Reasons for Selection of the Institution**

| Reasons                                | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | d.f | F      | P-Value  |
|--|----------------|-------------|-----|--------|----------|
| Aims of the institution is very good   | 475.63         | 158.54      | 3   | 247.20 | 0.000*** |
| Achieved tribal empowerment            | 329.80         | 109.93      | 3   | 245.09 | 0.000*** |
| Better organisation to serve the needs | 423.73         | 141.24      | 3   | 232.92 | 0.000*** |
| Simple procedures and formalities      | 500.79         | 166.93      | 3   | 322.88 | 0.000*** |
| Timely services by the institution     | 118.81         | 39.60       | 3   | 28.34  | 0.000*** |
| Easy accessibility                     | 66.72          | 22.24       | 3   | 17.53  | 0.000*** |
| Educate the tribes                     | 1.07           | 0.36        | 3   | 0.20   | 0.900    |
| Reputation of the institution          | 6.21           | 2.07        | 3   | 1.22   | 0.300    |

|                                |       |      |   |      |         |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|---|------|---------|
| Familiarity of the institution | 16.29 | 5.43 | 3 | 3.12 | 0.030** |
| Concern for solving complaints | 11.35 | 3.78 | 3 | 2.24 | 0.080   |

(Source: Survey Data),

\*\*\* and \*\* indicates 1% and 5% level of significance.

## Result of ANOVA- H2d

H1b: The reason for selection of development institution is independent of the educational level of tribes.

Table 1.2 shows the result of ANOVA of education and reasons for selection of the institution. It can be seen that the reasons such as aims of the institution is every good, achieved tribal empowerment, better institution to serve the needs of the tribes, simple procedures and formalities and timely services by the institution are depending on the educational qualification of the tribes as the p-value is less than 0.01 at 1% level of significance. Other reasons such as easy accessibility, educate the tribes, reputation of the institution, familiarity of the institution and concern for solving complaints are independent of their educational qualification as the p-value is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance.

| Table 1.2 : Result of ANOVA-: Education wise Analysis of Reasons for Selection of the Institution |                |             |      |       |          |
|---|----------------|-------------|------|-------|----------|
| Reasons   | Sum of Squares | Mean Square | d.f. | F     | P-Value  |
| Aims of the institution is very good  | 205.71         | 41.14       | 5    | 30.53 | 0.000*** |
| Achieved tribal empowerment   | 144.39         | 28.88       | 5    | 30.93 | 0.000*** |
| Better organisation to serve the needs  | 198.74         | 39.75       | 5    | 33.25 | 0.000*** |
| Simple procedures and formalities   | 241.25         | 48.25       | 5    | 40.36 | 0.000*** |
| Timely services by the institution  | 47.11          | 9.42        | 5    | 5.92  | 0.000*** |
| Easy accessibility  | 5.71           | 1.14        | 5    | 0.80  | 0.550    |
| Educate the tribes  | 3.75           | 0.75        | 5    | 0.43  | 0.830    |
| Reputation of the institution   | 8.28           | 1.66        | 5    | 0.98  | 0.430    |
| Familiarity of the institution  | 5.01           | 1.00        | 5    | 0.56  | 0.730    |
| Concern for solving complaints  | 12.56          | 2.51        | 5    | 1.48  | 0.200    |

(Source: Survey Data),

\*\*\* indicates 1% level of significance.

## Result of Kruskal Wallis H Test- H3c

H2a: Quality of services of the tribal development institution is independent of the age group of tribes.

Table 1.3 shows the result of Kruskal Wallis H test. It can be seen from the table that all the factors of quality of services are dependent of the age group of tribes, because the p-value is less than 0.001 at 1% level of significance for every factors.

**Table 1.3: Result of Kruskal Wallis H Test- Age wise Analysis of Quality of Services of the Institutions**

| Quality of Services           | $\chi^2$ Value | df | P-Value  |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----|----------|
| Regularly identify your needs | 41.67          | 3  | 0.000*** |

|   |        |   |          |
|---|--------|---|----------|
| Inform you about new developmental schemes                                | 285.38 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Regularly enquire about the welfare of you and your family.               | 150.93 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Listen to you and speak in a language that you can understand             | 66.85  | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Encourage you to do things in your own way                                | 236.27 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Always take speedy actions to solve the problems of tribes                | 86.88  | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Employees of the institution are willing and able to provide services     | 14.69  | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Employees provide services reliably and consistently                      | 85.42  | 3 | 0.002*** |
| Employees show much concern in solving complaints                         | 122.14 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| With your past relationship, you think that they are trustworthy          | 334.69 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Educate the tribes about the services                                     | 270.82 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Providing accurate and timely services                                    | 166.79 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Creating a sense of belongingness among tribes                            | 119.56 | 3 | 0.000*** |
| Your relationship with the institution is found to be very successful one | 161.80 | 3 | 0.000*** |

(Source: Survey Data), \*\*\* indicates 1% level of significance.

## Result of Kruskal Wallis H Test- H3d

H2b: Quality of services of the tribal development institution is independent of the educational qualification of tribes.

Table 1.4 shows the result of Kruskal Wallis H Test. With regard to all the factors of quality of services, educational qualifications of the tribes are dependent because the p-value is less than 0.05 or 0.01 for every factor. So we can say that there is significant difference between educational qualification of the tribes and the factor of quality of services provided by the developmental institutions.

**Table 1.4: Result of Kruskal Wallis H Test- Education wise Analysis of Quality of Services of the Institutions**

| Quality of Services   | $\chi^2$ Value | df | P-Value  |
|---|----------------|----|----------|
| Regularly identify your needs   | 30.62          | 5  | 0.000*** |
| Inform you about new developmental schemes                            | 74.49          | 5  | 0.004*** |
| Regularly enquire about the welfare of you and your family.           | 79.10          | 5  | 0.012*** |
| Listen to you and speak in a language that you can understand         | 28.04          | 5  | 0.000*** |
| Encourage you to do things in your own way                            | 149.77         | 5  | 0.000*** |
| Always take speedy actions to solve the problems of tribes            | 47.58          | 5  | 0.001*** |
| Employees of the institution are willing and able to provide services | 26.47          | 5  | 0.030**  |
| Employees provide services reliably and consistently                  | 57.17          | 5  | 0.005*** |
| Employees show much concern in solving complaints                     | 108.32         | 5  | 0.000*** |

|   |        |   |          |
|---|--------|---|----------|
| With your past relationship, you think that they are trustworthy          | 55.07  | 5 | 0.010*** |
| Educate the tribes about the services                                     | 157.90 | 5 | 0.000*** |
| Providing accurate and timely services                                    | 57.34  | 5 | 0.026**  |
| Creating a sense of belongingness among tribes                            | 63.45  | 5 | 0.000*** |
| Your relationship with the institution is found to be very successful one | 23.97  | 5 | 0.020**  |

(Source: Survey Data),

\*\*\* and \*\* indicates 1% and 5% level of significance.

**Association Between Quality of Services and Tribal Empowerment** After reducing the fourteen variables of quality of services to four factors, it is important to establish the relationship between these factors and tribal empowerment. So, regression analysis is done with these factors and tribal empowerment variable. Tribal empowerment is taken as dependant variable and the four factors such as behavioural quality factor, satisfaction of relationship, need oriented factor and service oriented factor are taken as predictors. The result of regression analysis is presented in the table 1.5, the regression has yielded  $R^2$  0.693 , which implies that 69.30% of the variations are explained by these four predictor variables. The F value is 217.050 with p-value 0.000, which indicate that there is significant relationship between the tribal empowerment variable and the four factors of quality of services.

**Table 1.5: Regression Analysis**

| Model      | R     | $R^2$ | df | F       | P-Value  |
|------------|-------|-------|----|---------|----------|
| Regression | 0.832 | .693  | 4  | 217.050 | 0.000*** |

(Source: Survey Data), \*\*\* 1% level of significance.

Beta co-efficients of regression variable is presented in Table 1.6

**Table 1.6: Beta co-efficients of Regression**

| Factors                             | Beta  |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Constant Value                      | 3.145 |
| Behavioural Quality Factor          | 0.023 |
| Satisfaction of Relationship Factor | 0.159 |
| Need Oriented Factor                | 0.252 |
| Service Oriented Factor             | 0.136 |

(Source: Survey Data)

Therefore the regression equation for perceptual variable is  $Y = 3.145 + 0.023 V_1 + 0.159 V_2 + 0.252 V_3 + 0.136 V_4$

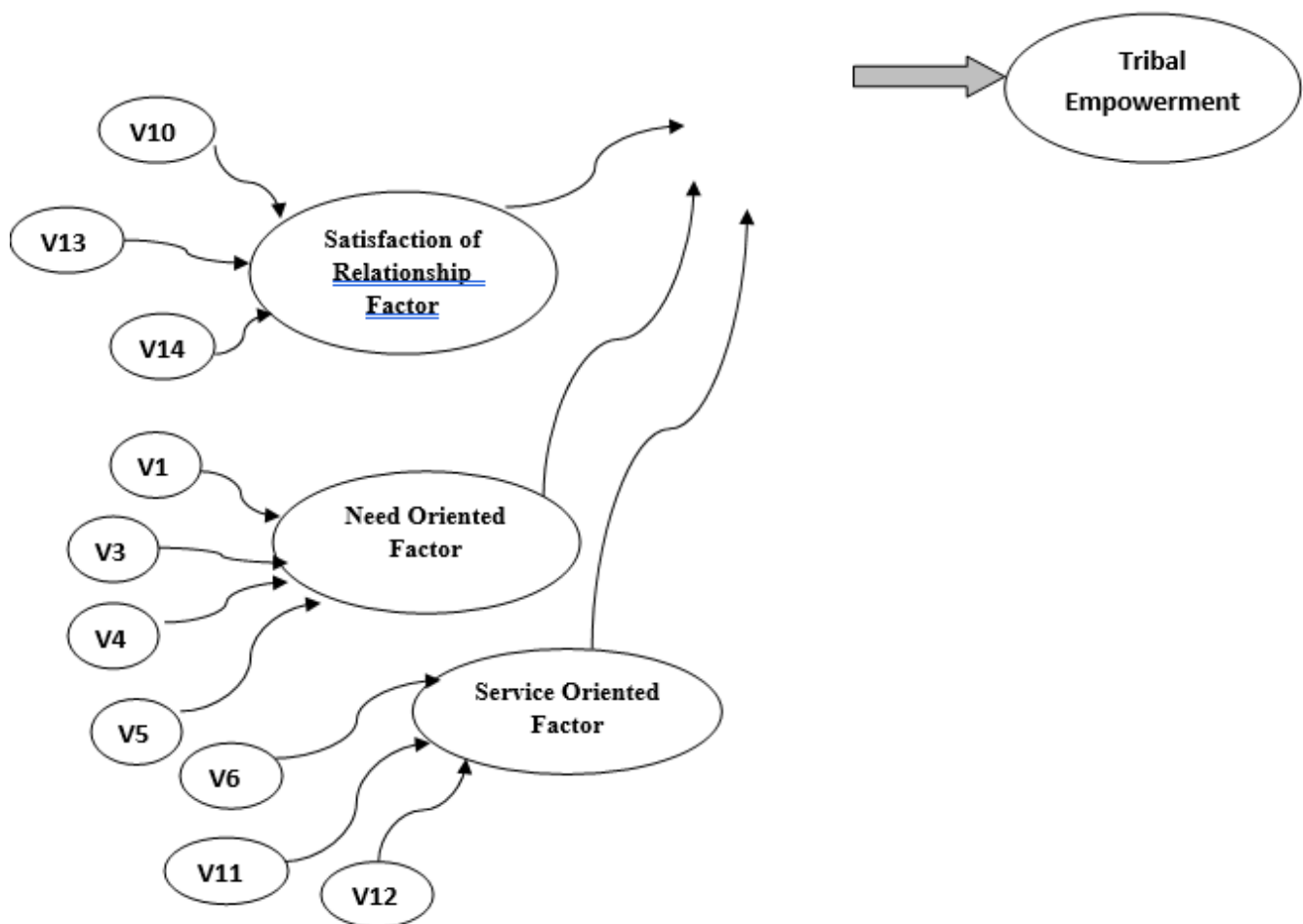
Here the dependant variable y represents the level of tribal empowerment.  $V_1$  indicate the behavioural quality factor,  $V_2$  indicate the satisfaction of relationship factor,  $V_3$  indicate the need oriented factor and  $V_4$  indicate the service oriented factor, all these are the independent factors that influence the level of



tribal empowerment. In this regression equation all these factors are positively associated with the level of tribal empowerment achieved. The most important factor that influences the level of tribal empowerment is the need oriented factor then comes the satisfaction of relationship, service oriented factor and behavioural quality factor. The co-efficient of determination or  $R^2$  indicate that 69.30% variations are explained by this model. If we add more related variables to this model, its explanatory power will increase.

## Conceptual Model of Quality of Services and Tribal Empowerment

Researcher has developed a Conceptual Model based on the result of factor analysis and regression, which is presented in Figure 1.1



## Findings

### • Age wise Analysis of Reasons for Selection of the Institution-

The developmental institutions are mostly chosen by the tribes of age group in between 30-40 years and the most important reason for their selection is its simple procedures and formalities. The tribes of Age group in between 40-50 years less choose the institutions, the reason may be they achieved tribal empowerment and aims of the institution is very good. The reasons for selection of development institution is dependent of the age group with regard to all the factors except the reasons such as educate the tribes, reputation of the institution and concern for solving complaints.

- **Education wise Analysis of Reasons for selection of the institution-**

The developmental institutions are mostly chosen by tribes having primary education and the most important reason for their selection include aims of the institution is very good and simple procedures and formalities. The developmental institutions are less chosen by tribes having upper primary education and the reason for that may be better organisation to serve the needs and simple procedures and formalities. The reason for selection of institution is dependent to the educational level with regard to all factors except the reasons such as easy accessibility, educate the tribes, reputation of the institution, familiarity of the institution and concern for solving complaints.

- **Age wise Analysis of the Quality of Services of the institution-**

Tribes of age group in between 30-40 years mostly consider the quality of services and the important factors may be with your past relationship you think that they are trustworthy and inform you about new developmental schemes. Tribes of age group of above 50 years are in less agreement with the factors of quality of services and the reasons for that may be inform you about new developmental schemes and with your past relationship you think that they are trustworthy. Quality of services of the tribal development institution is dependent of the age group of the tribes.

- **Education wise analysis of the Quality of Services of the institution –**

The tribes having primary education mostly agree with the factors of quality of services such as educate the tribes about the services and inform you about new developmental schemes and the tribes having degree and above are in less agreement with the factors of quality of services such as providing accurate and timely services and employees show much concern in solving complaints. Quality of services of the tribal development institution is dependent of the educational level of the tribes

### **Policy Implications**

- Awareness programmes may be given by the developmental institutions to the tribes related to social, financial, health and sanitation activities through Oorukkootams.
- Developmental institutions should take necessary measures to interact the tribes with other people of the society to reduce their shyness and create a positive attitude to fit them for the present world.
- Developmental institutions should simplify their formalities and procedure for getting assistance to the tribes by giving proper information about the documents to be produced, from where these may get, the maximum time for sanctioning the assistance etc. in clear terms, that must found to be more beneficial to them, otherwise they have to come every day in the office.
- The developmental institutions may widen their awareness programmes by appointing separate agents, who directly visit the colonies and approach the tribes personally and help them to get assistance as per their requirement.
- Developmental institutions should formulate a need based strategy for each tribal community. They can promote the tribes by providing assistance that is suitable for their customs and traditions. Select a person from their own colony to convey the messages that are actually aimed by the developmental institutions.
- Developmental institutions grant fund for the house construction programmes to the tribes but that amount is inadequate for meeting their requirements. So sufficient funds may be released for completing their work.



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