



SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS AMONG NOMADIC PEOPLE IN TAMIL NADU

Dr. J. Jayachithra

*Assistant Professor,
Department of Education,
Alagappa University College of Education,
Alagappa University,
Sivaganga, Tamil Nadu, India.*

Abstract

Nomadic communities in Tamil Nadu represent some of the most marginalize populations, facing unique challenges due to their migratory lifestyle, limited educational opportunities, unstable livelihoods, and insufficient social protection. Despite the existence of various policies aimed at promoting inclusive development, these communities continue to encounter significant barriers in accessing education, healthcare, and employment. This paper reviews the socio-economic and educational status, emphasizing critical issues such as poverty, irregular employment, inadequate housing, and pressing educational challenges, including low literacy rates and high dropout rates of nomadic people in Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, it examines key policy initiatives, such as the Right to Education Act, and proposes effective strategies for implementation through community participation, enhanced outreach, and adaptable educational models. This study asserts that sustainable development for these communities demands inclusive policies and

robust collaboration among the government, educational institutions, and civil society. By working together, we can ensure equitable opportunities and advance social justice for all.

Keywords: Nomadic Communities, Educational Inclusion, Socio-economic Development, Policy Implementation, Tamil Nadu, Marginalized Communities, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Nomadic communities represent one of the most marginalized and socially excluded populations in India. However, rapid socio-economic transformation, urbanization, and declining demand for traditional occupations have adversely affected their livelihoods. In Tamil Nadu, many nomadic and semi-nomadic communities continue to experience persistent poverty, insecure employment, inadequate housing, poor healthcare access, and social discrimination, limiting their opportunities for sustainable development.

Socio-economic status significantly influences access to education, healthcare,



employment, and social welfare, while education serves as a fundamental driver of individual empowerment and social mobility. For nomadic communities, frequent migration, lack of permanent residence, inadequate identity documentation, financial insecurity, and limited awareness of government welfare programmes often disrupt children's education, resulting in irregular attendance, high dropout rates, and low educational attainment. These challenges reinforce a cycle of poverty and social exclusion across generations.

Although Tamil Nadu has made significant progress in literacy, educational access, and human development, these achievements have not been uniformly experienced by all sections of society, particularly nomadic communities. The Government of Tamil Nadu have introduced several policy initiatives, scholarship programmes, and various social welfare schemes aimed at promoting educational equity and socio-economic inclusion. Despite these efforts, challenges such as inadequate policy implementation, administrative inefficiencies, limited awareness, insufficient documentation, and social exclusion continue to hinder the effective delivery of these benefits to nomadic populations. Therefore, there is a need to critically examine the socio-economic and educational status of nomadic people in Tamil Nadu, assess the effectiveness of existing policy interventions, identify implementation challenges, and explore strategies to foster inclusive, equitable, and

sustainable development for these historically marginalized communities.

Review of Literature

MK Sumithra 2020, presents a paper entitled "Lifestyle and mental well-being of nomadic tribal community members in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu," which focuses on the lifestyle and mental well-being of members of the nomadic tribal community. This nomadic lifestyle significantly impacts their mental health and aspirations for personal development. The present study aims to shed light on the lifestyle and mental well-being of the Kaattunayakan nomadic tribal community in Sathyamoorthy Nagar, located in the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu.

R Hariharan 2020, study addresses the "Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes: A Study of Tamil Nadu State" utilizes secondary data from the Census of India for the years 2001 and 2011, along with the Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India from 2013 and other research studies, to conduct a cross-classification analysis aimed at achieving its objectives. The findings of the study indicate that a majority of tribal people in Tamil Nadu live below the poverty line. The analysis reveals that the educational, employment, and economic conditions of the tribal population in Tamil Nadu are currently very poor. Therefore, it is crucial for the state of Tamil Nadu to focus on addressing the challenges faced by indigenous communities and to work towards improving their education, employment, and economic status.

Amala, n.d.2023, study addresses the plight of bonded laborers children in access to Education and their Social status. The study dig the more inner realities and exclusionary practices in society in case of the bonded labours and focuses on the social and economic status of them. In addition, prospects of Education for children is one of the key platforms for empowerment and social emancipation.

Socio-economic Status among Nomadic People

Socio-economic status among nomadic people refers to their overall social and economic position within society, determined by factors such as income, occupation, education, housing conditions, access to healthcare, ownership of assets, and participation in social and economic activities. For nomadic communities, socio-economic status is closely associated with their traditional livelihood practices, patterns of mobility, and the opportunities available to access essential public services. Due to their migratory lifestyle, many nomadic groups experience irregular employment, low and unstable incomes, inadequate housing, limited access to education and healthcare, poor infrastructure, and social exclusion. These conditions often restrict their participation in mainstream development and contribute to persistent poverty and marginalization.

In the context of Tamil Nadu, the socio-economic status of nomadic people reflects the extent to which they are able to secure sustainable livelihoods, benefit from

government welfare programmes, access quality education and healthcare, and participate in social, economic, and civic life. Therefore, socio-economic status is not merely an indicator of financial well-being but also encompasses the social opportunities, living conditions, and overall quality of life experienced by nomadic communities.

Educational Status among Nomadic People

Educational status among nomadic people refers to their level of access to education, literacy, school enrolment, attendance, educational attainment, and opportunities for learning. It reflects the extent to which children and adults from nomadic communities can participate in and complete formal education. Factors such as frequent migration, poverty, lack of permanent residence, limited access to schools, and social exclusion often affect their educational progress. Educational status is an important indicator of social development, empowerment, and improved quality of life among nomadic communities.

Policies for Implementing the Development of Nomadic Communities

The socio-economic and educational development of nomadic communities requires coordinated efforts through national and state-level policies that promote education, social inclusion, livelihood security, and access to welfare services. The Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu have introduced several initiatives to improve the living conditions

and educational opportunities of marginalized communities.

Key policies include the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which ensures free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14 years, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which promotes inclusive, equitable, and flexible learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups. The Samagra Shiksha programme further strengthens school education through infrastructure development, teacher training, digital learning, and inclusive education initiatives.

Scholarship schemes, free educational support, skill development, and social welfare measures like healthcare and food security aim to enhance the socio-economic conditions of nomadic communities. Digital inclusion and community-based initiatives are crucial for raising awareness and improving access to government services. Effective implementation of these policies requires strong coordination, community involvement, regular monitoring, and increased awareness to ensure that nomadic communities benefit and achieve educational and socio-economic empowerment (Mishra & Pettala, 2023).

Challenges in Policy Implementation

Despite the availability of several government policies and welfare programmes, their implementation among nomadic communities in Tamil Nadu faces numerous challenges. Frequent migration makes it difficult to ensure continuous access to education, healthcare, and other public

services. Many families lack essential identity documents, such as Aadhaar cards, ration cards, and residence certificates, limiting their eligibility for welfare schemes. Poverty and unstable livelihoods often compel children to engage in family occupations or labour, leading to irregular school attendance and high dropout rates. In addition, limited awareness of government programmes, social discrimination, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient coordination among government departments, and weak monitoring mechanisms further reduce the effectiveness of policy implementation. These challenges contribute to the continued socio-economic and educational marginalization of nomadic communities.

Strategies for Effective Policy Implementation

Improving the socio-economic and educational status of nomadic communities requires inclusive and well-coordinated implementation strategies. Governments should strengthen outreach programmes to increase awareness of available welfare schemes and simplify documentation procedures to improve access to public services. Expanding skill development programmes, livelihood support, and entrepreneurship initiatives can enhance economic security and reduce dependence on traditional occupations. Regular monitoring, interdepartmental coordination, and partnerships with local bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can improve policy delivery. Furthermore,

encouraging community participation in planning and implementation will help ensure that policies are responsive to the specific needs and cultural context of nomadic communities, thereby promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to improve the socio-economic and educational status of nomadic communities in Tamil Nadu:

1. Strengthen the implementation of existing educational and welfare policies through effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
2. Ensure easy access to identity documents and simplify administrative procedures so that nomadic families can benefit from government schemes.
3. Promote flexible educational approaches, including mobile schools, bridge courses, seasonal hostels, and digital learning facilities, to address the challenges of migration.
4. Expand scholarship programmes, residential schooling, and financial assistance to improve school enrolment, retention, and higher education participation.
5. Enhance skill development, vocational training, and livelihood programmes to improve employment opportunities and economic self-reliance.

6. Conduct regular awareness campaigns to increase knowledge about educational opportunities, healthcare services, and welfare schemes among nomadic communities.
7. Encourage collaboration among government departments, educational institutions, local bodies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure effective policy implementation.
8. Promote community participation in planning, implementing, and evaluating development programmes to ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate and sustainable.

Conclusion

Nomadic communities in Tamil Nadu continue to face significant socio-economic and educational disadvantages despite the existence of various government policies and welfare programmes. Persistent challenges such as poverty, migration, inadequate access to education, limited awareness, and administrative barriers continue to hinder their overall development. Although national and state initiatives have created opportunities for improving their quality of life, effective implementation remains a key concern. Strengthening policy execution through coordinated governance, inclusive educational practices, improved livelihood support, and active community participation can significantly enhance the well-being of nomadic communities. A comprehensive and sustainable approach that addresses both socio-economic and educational needs is

essential to ensure social inclusion, educational equity, and long-term development, thereby enabling nomadic communities to participate fully in the state's social and economic progress.

References

1. Alamin, A., Tlili, A., & Wu, G. (2025). The challenges and solutions of maintaining education for nomadic students in Sudan: Insights from the literature and experts. *Review of Education*, 13(2), e70073.
2. Anusree, G. I., & Umajyothi, V. (2021). A Case Study of the Educational and Socio-Economic Status of the Kattunayakan Community in Kerala. *Journal of the Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies*, 15(4), 1-10.
3. Dhal, S. K. (2023). Mainstreaming Scheduled Tribes through Education. In *Education of Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Groups* (pp. 58-69). Routledge India.
4. Eswarappa, K. (2024). Precarious Livelihoods of a Nomadic Community. *Indian Anthropologist*, 54(2), 51-67.
5. Government of India. (2009). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Ministry of Law and Justice <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2009-35.pdf>
6. Hariharan, R. (2020). Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes: A Study of Tamilnadu State. *JOURNAL OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING* (ISSN NO: 2095-9524), 5(1).
7. Kwashabawa, B. B. (2024). Nomadic Education Needs Assessment. Technical Report, Plan International.
8. Lanyasunya, A. R. (2023). Socio-economic factors affecting access to basic formal education among the nomadic pastoralists: A case study of the Samburu. *Editon Consortium Journal of Curriculum and Educational Studies*, 4(1), 403-407.
9. Meena, M. (2020). Educational constraints and condition of denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in Rajasthan. In *Social Inclusion and Education in India* (pp. 176-191). Routledge India.
10. Ministry of Education. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Government of India. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
11. Ministry of Education. (2021). Samagra Shiksha: An integrated scheme for school education. Government of India. <https://samagra.education.gov.in/>
12. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. (2022). Development and Welfare of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DWBDNC). Government of India. <https://socialjustice.gov.in/>
13. Mishra, M., & Pettala, R. (Eds.). (2023). Education of socio-economic disadvantaged groups: From marginalisation to inclusion. Taylor & Francis.



-
14. National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. (2018). Report of the Idate Commission. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
<https://socialjustice.gov.in/>
 15. Oli, L. B. (2023). Nomadic lifestyle and sustainable livelihood practices of the raute. Shanti Journal, 3(1-2), 106-123.
 16. Sumithra, M. K., & Babu, J. (2020). Lifestyle and mental wellbeing of nomadic tribal community members in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu. communities, 40(72).
 17. Yoganandham, G. (2023). Socio-Economic conditions of primitive tribal groups in Nilgiris district considering environment, societal issues, and Education-An assessment. International Journal of All Research Education and Scientific Methods (IJARESM).