



## Adjustment Problems Of Irular Tribal Women In Kancheepuram District, Chennai, India

### KEYWORDS

Adjustment problems, Irular women

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### ABSTRACT

*Irulars are one of the most backward tribes who are facing innumerable challenges in life. The women of this community are totally debarred from legal, economic, educational and political rights. Their daily life is filled with lot of struggles. The present study was conducted among the Irular women to identify the extent of adjustment problems in the areas of health, emotion, self, home and social dimensions. A descriptive research with sample size of 80 from three villages of Nemeli, Thiruvendathai and Ekkatur was studied. A self-administered interview schedule and Adjustment Inventory (Ramamurthy) was used for collecting information for the study. The various adjustmental problems faced by these women are described during the course of the study. The findings show that nearly half of the respondents 38.1% come under the age group of 18-28 years. 96.8% families have the male as the head of the family. 74.4% of the respondents got married below 18 years of age, the rationale idea behind this is that the community married their adolescent girls as soon as their reached their puberty. Majority of the respondents 82.1% have had arranged marriage and 17.9% of the respondents got married by love marriage. The economic system of a family depends on the earning capacity of the husband. Majority 72.2% of the husbands monthly earning ranged from 100-299 rupees. The respondents (32.1%) suffered from pain throughout the whole body because of the nature of work (coolie workers involved in doing physical labor and exposure to extremes of weather). It was also observed that 71% of the respondents exhibit a high level of problem in the health dimension. The study further highlights the impact of these problems on the general functioning of these women.*

### INTRODUCTION

The term "tribe" mean a group of people that live at a particular place from time immemorial. Anthropologically the tribe is a system of social organisation which includes several local groups- villages, districts on lineage and normally includes a common territory, a common language and a common culture, a common name, political system, simple economy, religion and belief, primitive law and own education system. Constitutionally a tribe is he who has been mentioned in the scheduled list of Indian constitution under Article 342(i) and 342(ii).

Irulars are a tribal community who live in southern India, mainly in Kanchipuram, Nilgiris and Villupuram districts of Tamilnadu. Ethnically they belong to negritos race. Their language Irula is a mix of Tamil and Kannada. These tribes are behest with problems of land alienation, displacement and political disempowerment, harassment, basic rights violated, bonded labourers. Their main occupation was snake and rat catching and at present they also work as laborers do fishing. These groups have been traditionally economically and socially marginalized, Illiterate, lacking of income earning skills and were in general not accepted by the larger society. Their mother tongue is Irula. The languages spoken with others are Tamil and Telugu. The Tamil script is used. The term Irular is derived from the word irul, meaning black or dark.

Tribal women are totally debarred from legal, economic, educational, and political rights. Their daily life is filled with lot of struggles. Cultural factors and traditional customs have a major influence on tribal women even in the twenty first century. Irula women are face a lot of struggle and have to work hard for their children and for their family. They are not allowed by Irula men to initiate or take decisions in the local village problems. Women are not holding chief position or village leadership in Irula community. The women are equally earning to men and their work participation is also equal in the work place. But they are not treated equally to men and they not getting the equal wages compared to men.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the socio-economic status of the respondents
2. To study the adjustmental problems of the respondents
3. To suggest intervention for the problems

#### RESEARCH DESIGN: Descriptive Research Design

#### SELECTION OF STUDY AREA

The present study was carried out in three villages among the Irular tribal hamlets of Nemeli, Thiruvendathai and Ekkatur in Kancheepuram district. All the three hamlets have similar socio-demographic backgrounds.

#### SAMPLE DESIGN

The sample consisted of married 80 females belonging to three villages were taken as the sample and hence no sampling method was used.

#### TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION:

The main tool used for data collection was a semi-structured interview schedule. It was constructed after reviewing the past researches on women conducted in India with the tribal's covering the various health, emotion, self, home and social dimensions.

The following self-administered interview schedules and scales were included in the package for the purpose of collecting information for the study. Tamil translated versions of Interview Schedule were used to collect data.

1. Interview Schedule: A socio-demographic information form constructed for this study.
2. Data collection was done by using Adjustment Problem Inventory- (Ramamurthy 1968) Findings

**FINDINGS****PERSONAL DETAILS**

The above table shows that nearly majority of the respondents (38.1%) come under the age group of 18-28 years, Majority of the respondents (96.8%) families have the male as the head of the family followed by 3.2% of the families where female are head the household. 87.3% of the respondents are illiterate and the remaining 12.7% are literate (highest education is completion of 4th standard). The respondents of this community concentrate mainly on raising the family income and were made to raise the family income. Hence education was considered and given importance. Another reason shared by the women folk was that even if they were educated finding a suitable bride to match their educational status was difficult. The women once reaching puberty married them because the community felt that the women had to sooner or later marry and have children.

70.6 % of the respondents have 2 children and below and the remaining 29.4% of the respondents had 3 children and above (Highest being 5). Majority 74.4.% of the respondents got married below 18 years, the rationale behind this is that the community married their adolescent girls as soon as they reached their puberty. These findings are similar to the study done by Sasirega (2010) where the researcher observed that 68% of the respondents in the study are of Chengalpet got married below 16 years of age.

The above table reveals that majorities 27 % of the respondents were employed and the remaining 73.0 % were not employed. Majority 63.3% of the women were daily wagers and were involved in building construction work, road laying work etc. agriculture farm, 86.9% of the men are coolie workers and daily wagers and the remaining 13 % are fishermen. Earlier Irular tribes earned their livelihood by catching snake, snare, rats, selling firewood, honey and is bee wax. After the ban posed by the Indian government the export of snake skins in 1976 under the wild life (protection) Act, 1972 the Irular tribe lost their livelihood and were forced to work as coolies construction work et. The remaining who could not find work changed their profession to fishing for their existence. The same result is observed in the study by Sin.E et al).

**SOCIAL STATUS**

The social status of the tribe is measured by the type of marriage, pattern of marriage, type of family system, type of family, and participation of these women in festivals. Majority of the respondents 82.1% have had arranged marriage. Among Irular tribes marriage is usually arranged by the parents, however people are free to choose their own spouses or life partner. Once they choose the parents arrange marriage if inside their community. Similar findings have been reported by Dr. Sinu.E. In the Irular women (2013) at Chengalpet District that they practiced arranged marriage system of marriage. Endogamy as the pattern of marriage was followed by majority 59.7 % of the respondents. Endogamy helps them to survive as distinct communities over a long time, in societies with other practices and beliefs and also preserve their ancestral lineage. Majority 76 % of the respondents followed patriarchy family system as this system gives power and control of the men rather than the women whereas 4.0% of the respondents follow matriarchal family system.

The Indian family system is moving away from the traditional joint family system to becoming nuclear in nature. The tribal community resides on the outskirts of the city on foot hills or seashore. Among the Irular community 42.5% of the female in the tribe participate in all their festivals whereas only 24.9% of the male participate in festivals. India is a land of varied cultures and celebrates many festivals. The Irular tribes celebrate their festival Masi Maham which is a yearly festival. Masi Maham attracts people from tribes from all over south India when

weddings are solemnized and happen.

**ECONOMIC STATUS:**

The economic system of a family depends on the earning capacity of the husband. Majority 72.2% of the husbands monthly earning ranged from 100-299 rupees. 88.5 % of the spouse contributed money for family expenses and the remaining. The income of the women was based on the nature of the profession and the days of work. Majority of the respondents 63.1% did not have a steady income that is they were coolie/daily wages and their income depended on the availability of work (seasonal employment).

**JOB STATUS**

87.7 % of them did not get equal wages the rationale behind this was that these women were working as coolies or housemaid (the wages differ among gender) and the remaining 12.3 % got equal wages the rationale is that these women were vendors and fisherwomen. Majority of the respondents 63.1% worked for 9 hours and above because they were involved in coolie work.

**HEALTH STATUS**

Majority 91.7 % of the respondents had normal delivery, 32.1 % of the respondents suffered from pain throughout the whole body because of the nature of work (coolie workers involved in doing physical labor and exposure to extremes of weather). 31 % of the respondents suffered from anemia. This finding is similar to the study by Shivprasad et al (2011) Anemia lowered resistance to fatigue, affected working capacity under conditions of stress and increased susceptibility to other diseases. 12.8 % of them had respiratory problem probably because of working as construction work or in road side cleaning (unprotected work). It is also inferred that 88.5 % of the families lack sanitation facility and the remaining 11.5 % possess sanitation facility.

**Table 1. ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS DIMENSIONS**

S.No	Variable	No Of Respondents (N:252)	Percentage
1	Health		
	Low Level	73	29.0
	High Level	179	71.0
2	Emotional		
	Low Level	48	19.0
	High Level	204	81.0
3	Self		
	Low Level	41	16.3
	High Level	211	83.7
4	Home		
	Low Level	99	39.3
	High Level	153	60.7
5	Social		
	Low Level	83	32.9
	High Level	169	67.1
6	Adjustment Problem Overall		
	Low Level	41	16.3
	High Level	211	83.7

It is observed from the above table 1 that 71% of the respondents exhibit a high level of problem in the health dimension and 81% of the respondents had problem in the emotional dimension. The same can be said in 83.7 % of the respondents who showed problem in emotional dimension at an individual level and also had problems in adjustment at home dimension (60.7%) between the family members. It is also seen that the social dimension also shows a high percentage (67.1%) of adjustment problems. Hence it is seen that the respondents exhibited problems in overall adjustment (5 dimensions).

### SUGGESTIONS

Therefore working towards empowering the Irular women should happen in the following ways:

1. Elimination of barriers to their empowerment (access to resources, education, employment opportunities)
2. Coping strategies to address present psycho-social problems and future challenges without being dependent on social services.
3. Investing in skills for socio-economic empowerment of rural women (Skills development is key to improving rural productivity, employability and income-earning opportunities, enhancing food security and promoting environmentally sustainable rural development and livelihoods)
4. Conducting awareness programmes by social work students on welfare programmes
5. Strengthening self-help groups to showcase their rich cultural heritage and make them self-reliant

### CONCLUSION

As a conclusion it can be said that the Irular women face problems in adjustment, have feelings of insecurity, their perceived quality of life was not very high nor very low and their life satisfaction is very low. The reasons contributing to these can be because of Poverty, barriers to access of welfare schemes, lack of decision making capacity, no financial independence, multiple work roles, insecurity about the future of the children, non acceptance among the community in general, fear of violence at work place. This seems to be a vicious circle one leading to the other pushing them to live in state of uncertainty, fear, stress and strain. If the Irular women have to be strong then their psycho social wellbeing has to be good they have to be empowered to face challenges in day today life with courage.

Amartya Sen (1993), empowerment is reflected in a person's capability set. The 'capability' of a person depends on a variety of factors, including personal characteristics and social arrangements. Empowerment is the capacity to fulfill this capability and not just the choice to do so.

The respondents have problem in specific dimension or a combination of dimension or it can also be said that there is a relationship of one problem leading to a problem in the next dimension.

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