



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Commerce

ECONOMIC STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN IN IMPHAL WEST, MANIPUR

KEY WORDS: Traditional economic activities

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ABSTRACT

Manipuri women's role in the economic life of Manipur is significant. Manipuri women do not stay behind the veil. They also do all the buying and selling of goods in the market. Women dominate the markets in the rural and urban areas. Their unique role in the market will be known if one visits Khwairamband Bazar at the heart of Imphal. They are greatly involved in the agricultural related activities. They are artistic and creative which they prove in the field of handloom and handicrafts and dance. Their dominance in the field of sports not only in the national level but also in the international level is remarkable.

The work participation of Manipuri women in domestic sphere and the extensive work participation of women vendors in a well-known historic 'Women Market' in Manipur, Northeast India. All of the women were aware of the positive effects of economic independence, but some of them also revealed the negative effects on their physical and psychological health as well as the social ties within the households and communities due to the extensive workload and time issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

Manipur is one of the eight states that comprise picturesque northeast region of India. Broadly, Manipur consists of two distinct geographical regions, namely, oval shaped Manipur valley and the hills that surround the valley from all sides.

Imphal West district was created in 1997 out of the erstwhile Imphal district by transferring all the villages and towns of Imphal West I and Imphal West II sub-divisions vide Government of Manipur (Secretariat) Revenue Department Order No. 6/1/ 73-R(Pt-VIII) dated 17th June, 1997 under the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act of 1960.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Manipur has witnessed the successful role of collective women's power in the past and also in the present day. However despite their major contributions in the economic and political life of the state, they are not given their due position in society. This is indeed a matter of great concern, which we all need to ponder over.

There is a need to change the attitude of the society in general and men in particular. It is high time that we respect and reflect on the contributions of women not only in the economic sphere but also in the fields of cultural, political and sports. Women of Manipur deserve a higher status, for the development of any society the status of women is a key factor determining progress.

Economic status is the foremost issue in the contemporary world, especially in the developing world. Economic status in rural areas is gradually improving over a period of time. Many programmes and policies have been implemented to improve the economic status of population in rural areas. But in economic sense, people of the rural areas could not develop equally over the region.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To find out the economic status of rural women of Imphal West District, Manipur relating to their occupational status, sources of income, expenditure on foods, clothing, medicine, education, and other items, per capita income and expenditure.
- To suggest measures for improvement in their quality of life.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION

The methodology adopted in this study has been based in a very systematic way and data collections were employed in Primary data collection. In this research paper an attempt has been made to find out the actual economic status of population of different income groups. The entire study is based on primary data which have been collected by door to door survey with a suitable questionnaire by the researchers. Based on objectives 1 and 2 above, the following hypotheses were tested. These were analysed and interpreted in descriptive terms, using percentage and graphical representations.

Education

- Educational status and occupation (organized and unorganized)
- Educational status and income (high and low)
- Educational status and expenditure (high and low)
- Educational status and per capita income and expenditure (surplus and deficit)

Family system

- Family system and educational status (status between nuclear and joint family)
- Family system and occupation (organized or unorganized between nuclear and joint family)
- Family system and sources of income (sources between nuclear and joint family)
- Family system and expenditure (high or low between nuclear and joint family)
- Family system and per capita income and expenditure (surplus and deficit between nuclear and joint family)

Family size

- Family size and income (high or low between small and big family)
- Family size and expenditure (high or low between small and big family)
- Family size and per capita income and expenditure (surplus or deficit between small and big family)

5. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The problem of employment, indiscipline and understanding is increasing among women folk to get the knowledge of human civilization and for the development of economic conditions of Manipur. The economic needs of family are increasing day by day compelling women to take household

and having a large section of women to venture into employment. Apart from the socio- economic change, employments also provide some relief from the anatomy of home and routine work.

In the current study, an attempt has made to explore economic status of rural women in Imphal West District of Manipur, India. In this study, the economic aspects will include occupational status; sources of income; extent of expenditure on food; clothing; medicine; education; and other miscellaneous items; per capita income and expenditure.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study tries to make analysis of the collected data that enable to interpret them in the meaningful way. The economic status of rural women had been analysed on the basis of income, expenditure on foods, clothing, medicine, education, per capita income and expenditure. The variable-wise analysis was made and conclusions drawn in terms of percentage as described below.

1. Table Showing The Occupational Status Of The Study.

Sl. No.	Occupational status	Age- Group			Percentage
		Youth (15-24 years)	Adults (25-64 years)	Old Age (65 years and over)	
1	Housewife	-	53	15	68%
2	Weaver	-	2	4	6%
3	Cultivator	-	3	3	6%
4	Business	-	4	3	7%
5	Embroidery	-	2	-	2%
6	Anganwadi Worker	-	2	-	2%
7	Labour	-	3	-	3%
8	Govt. Service	-	4	2	6%

Source:- Primary data

The economic status of rural women were analysed on the basis of their occupational status, sources of income, per capita income and expenditure. The majority of the rural women i.e. 68 percent were housewives, 7 percent were business, 6 percent were weaver, another 6 percent cultivator, 3 percent labour, 2 percent embroidery, 2 anganwadi worker and 6 percent government service. The less participation of women in employment sector is relevant according to the finding of the study.

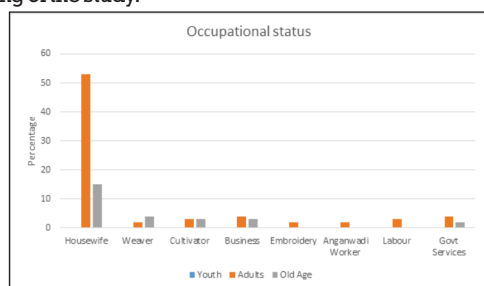


Fig: Graphical representation of occupational status.

2. Table showing the Source of income of Head of the family

Sl. No.	Occupation	Age- Group			Percentage
		Youth (15-24 years)	Adults (25-64 years)	Old Age (65 years and over)	
1	Business	-	8	4	12%
2	Carpenter	-	2	1	3%
3	Chowkidar	-	1	-	1%

4	Cultivator	-	25	7	32%
5	Driver	-	3	-	3%
6	Farmer	-	4	2	6%
7	Govt. Employee	-	21	3	24%
8	Pensioner	-	1	9	10%
9	Public Sector	-	5	-	5%
10	Social Worker	-	1	-	1%
11	Tailor	-	1	-	1%
12	Weaver	-	-	2	2%

Source:- Primary data

From the above table, their sources of income were 32 percent from cultivator, 24 percent government employee, 12 percent business, 10 percent pensioner and 2 percent weaver. Also there are 3 percent carpenter, 1 percent chowkidar, 3 percent driver, 6 percent farmer, 5 percent working in public sector, 1 percent social worker and tailoring. These are the source of income of the head of the family. Rural economy is mostly based on the agricultural sector. In addition the increasing agricultural tasks has forced women to work in their field.

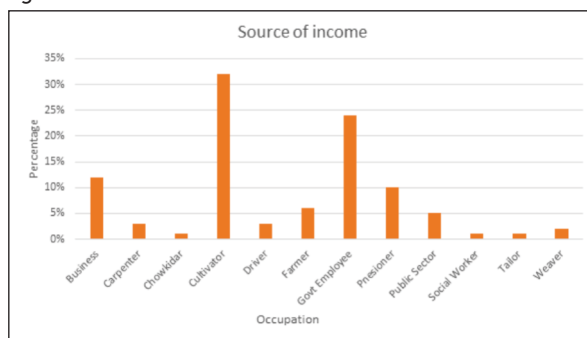


Fig: Graphical Representation According To The Source Of Income.

3. Table showing the per capita income.

Sl. No.	Per capita income	Age-Group			Percentage
		Youth (15-24 years)	Adults (25-64 years)	Old Age (65 years and over)	
1	Less than 5000	-	34	12	46%
2	Between 5000 to 10000	-	14	8	22%
3	More than 10000	-	25	7	32%

Source:- Primary data

From the above table, these interpret that the economic status of rural women relating to per capita income and expenditure were 46 percent less than 5000, 32 percent more than 10000 and 22 percent were between 5000 to 10000.

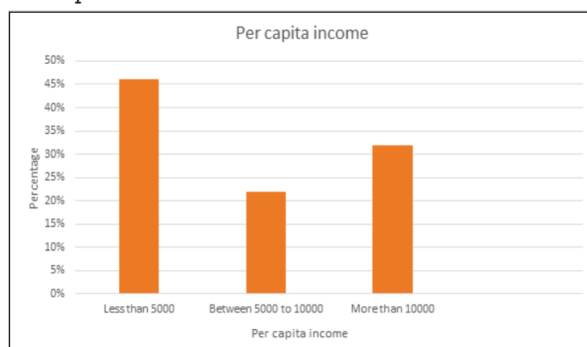


Fig: Graphical representation according to the per capita income.

Although comparatively higher income population enjoy a little better life but lower income population's economic

situation is very risky due to mainly low level of literacy and low income create many social issues and pollution.

7. IMPACT ON ECONOMIC STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN

The traditional roles associated with the home such as cooking, cleaning, caring of children etc. are allocated to women thereby rendering a less prominent status in society. Women are expected to play these traditional roles and they continued to do so. As they lived a dependent life, they cannot take decisions independently. Thus, their male counterparts continuously exploited them. Women are largely absent from public life. This shows clearly the difference in the status between men and women.

Regardless of the important key roles women play in agriculture by working along with men in production of crops right from the soil preparation until post-harvest activities, almost no woman had any say on agricultural-related financial decision making.

8. FINDINGS

The study has come up with some interesting findings which has great benefit to the state. As stated earlier, the present work was undertaken under the problem entitled: "Economic Status of Rural Women in Imphal West: An Empirical Study in Imphal West District of Manipur, India". The objectives of the study were to explore the economic status of rural women relating to their occupational status, sources of income, expenditure on foods, clothing, medicine, education and other items, per capita income and expenditure. Altogether 1000 sample households were involved in the study. These were selected through random sampling technique. The data were collected with the help of a self-developed interview schedule. In the light of the above objectives, the hypothesis had been interpreted in descriptive terms using simple percentage. The data were analysed, employing percentage and statistical graphical representations.

In the present study, the economic background of rural women includes age, education, family system, family size, health, marital status etc. The data related to these factors provide an understanding of empowerment of women in relation to the awareness levels directly related to social development.

It is found that, the average age of women respondents is between 25 to 64 years. It may be inferred that most of the women were in the adult group. As most of the respondents are literate, the study reveals that literacy levels were also higher which contributes to the social development. The study agrees while analysing the educational factors that most of the rural women bring a change to their educational status. The illiteracy rate of the women are less. The findings from the study reveals that family size directly related to personal health of women. It was found that most of the family size of the sample were medium. Women today had made use of their intelligence, knowledge and education to earn prestigious role in the households as well. Women are participating in almost all spheres of economic activity.

The study reveals that majority of the rural women were housewives. The less participation of women in employment sector is relevant according to the finding of the study. The study also reveals that rural economy is mostly based on the agricultural sector. In addition the increasing agricultural task has forced women to work in their field. But by providing necessary skills, alternative employment opportunities are challenges of women in the rural sector.

8. SUGGESTIONS

In the light of the current study, the following hypotheses may be some of the suggestion for further study:

- i. A similar study can be conducted covering the other Districts of Manipur.

- ii. A comparative study of Women's socio-economic status in different communities of Manipur can also be carried out.
- iii. Comparative studies on status of women in developed and under developed district can be carried out.

The hypotheses given above are suggestive, not exhaustive. The researcher may explore other variables and see the differences and correlation between the variables.

10. CONCLUSION

The status of Manipuri women has been undergoing drastic changes from era to era. Women today had made use of their intelligence, knowledge and education to earn prestigious role in the households as well. Women are participating in almost all spheres of economic activity. There is a growing consensus now that education, irrespective of who receives it, contributes to development. Though, most of the women are found to be literate, only few of them continued for higher studies. Thus, they need to be educated further because it is now widely recognised that education is a key aspect for the empowerment of women and higher the education, higher would be the possibilities of raising income and age at marriage, improve health and quality of life. Education is a powerful vehicle for women's equal access to knowledge, skills, jobs and participation in society.

One significant observation that we find today in Manipur is the rise in the number of women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups. The numbers of working women in different sectors are increasing. The women are the backbone of agricultural workforce but worldwide her hard work has mostly been unpaid. She does the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry, household works and also other allied activities for income generation. Her enlightenment will change the face of rural people one day.

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