

Livelihood Patterns and Socio-Economic Status of Yanadi and Irula Tribes: A Study of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT:

Tribal communities in India continue to experience socio-economic marginalization despite various developmental interventions undertaken by the government. The Yanadi and Irula tribes of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh largely depend on traditional occupations, wage labour, forest-based activities, and seasonal employment for their livelihood. The present study examines the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of these tribal communities with special reference to income, education, occupation, housing, health, and access to welfare schemes. The study is based on primary data collected from selected tribal households through a structured interview schedule using a multistage sampling method. Secondary data were obtained from government reports, census publications, journals, and tribal welfare records. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, correlation, and regression analysis were employed to analyse the data.

The findings reveal that a majority of tribal households continue to face low income levels, limited educational attainment, unemployment, inadequate healthcare facilities, and poor housing conditions. Livelihood diversification among the tribes remains limited due to lack of skills, institutional support, and market access. The study also found that government welfare schemes have contributed moderately towards improving living conditions, though awareness and accessibility remain uneven across settlements. Education, occupation, and participation in welfare programmes showed a positive relationship with household income, while larger family size exerted a negative effect on economic well-being. The study emphasizes the need for sustainable livelihood opportunities, improved educational facilities, skill development programmes, and effective implementation of tribal welfare policies to enhance the socio-economic conditions of the Yanadi and Irula tribes in the study area. The study found that 68.3% of tribal households belonged to low-income categories, while regression analysis indicated that education ($\beta = 0.365, p < 0.01$) and occupational diversification ($\beta = 0.284, p < 0.05$) significantly influenced household income.

KEYWORDS: Yanadi Tribe, Irula Tribe, Livelihood Patterns, Socio-Economic Status, Tribal Development, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities constitute one of the most vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged sections of Indian society. Despite constitutional safeguards, protective legislation, and numerous developmental programmes introduced by the Government of India, tribal populations continue to experience poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social exclusion, and inadequate access to basic amenities. According to the Census of India, Scheduled Tribes represent a significant proportion of the rural population and depend largely on agriculture, forest resources, wage labour, and traditional occupations for their livelihood. The socio-economic transformation of tribal communities has become an important area of research and policy concern in the context of inclusive development and sustainable livelihood promotion.

Livelihood refers to the means of securing the basic necessities of life, including food, shelter, clothing, income, and social security. Tribal livelihoods are closely associated with natural resources, forest ecosystems, seasonal employment, and indigenous knowledge systems. However, rapid modernization, deforestation, industrialization, displacement, and changing economic conditions have significantly affected the traditional livelihood systems of tribal communities across India. These changes have compelled many tribal households to diversify their occupations and migrate in search of employment opportunities. Consequently, understanding livelihood patterns and socio-economic conditions has become essential for designing effective tribal development policies.

Andhra Pradesh is home to several tribal communities possessing distinct cultural identities, social practices, and economic systems. Among them, the Yanadi and Irula tribes are recognized as socially and economically marginalized groups residing in different parts of the state, including Chittoor District. Traditionally, these tribes depended on hunting, gathering, forest produce collection, fishing, snake catching, agricultural labour, and other informal occupations for survival. Over time, declining forest dependence, limited land ownership, lack of educational opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure have adversely influenced their socio-economic conditions.

The Yanadi tribe is traditionally known for its close association with forest-based livelihoods and casual labour activities. Similarly, the Irula tribe has historically relied on forest resources, minor agricultural work, and traditional occupations linked with ecological knowledge. Although government welfare programmes, tribal sub-plans, housing schemes, educational assistance, and employment programmes have been implemented for tribal upliftment, the extent of socio-economic improvement among these communities remains uneven and inadequate. Problems such as low literacy levels, poor health conditions, unemployment, indebtedness, lack of productive assets, and social exclusion continue to affect their quality of life.

Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh provides an important setting for studying tribal livelihood patterns because of its socio-cultural diversity and rural economic structure. The district contains several tribal habitations where livelihood opportunities remain limited and development indicators are comparatively low. In recent years, economic transitions, migration, urban influence, and government interventions have altered the occupational structure and livelihood strategies of tribal households. Therefore, an empirical analysis of the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of Yanadi and Irula tribes is necessary to understand the challenges faced by these communities and the effectiveness of existing welfare measures.

The present study attempts to examine the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of the Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. The study focuses on major socio-economic variables such as income, education, occupation, housing, health, access to welfare schemes, and employment opportunities. It also analyses the factors influencing household income and livelihood diversification among tribal households. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to tribal development planning, policy formulation, and sustainable livelihood enhancement programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of marginalized tribal communities.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Walter Fernandes (2021) observed that tribal communities in India continue to face displacement, livelihood insecurity, and socio-economic exclusion despite developmental interventions. The study emphasized that limited access to productive assets and educational opportunities significantly affects tribal well-being.

N. Lalitha (2022) examined the socio-economic conditions of tribal households in Andhra Pradesh and found that low literacy, dependence on wage labour, and inadequate healthcare facilities continue to hinder tribal development.

S. Mahendra Dev (2021) highlighted that livelihood diversification and educational advancement are critical determinants of rural poverty reduction among marginalized communities.

World Bank (2022) reported that indigenous communities in South Asia experience lower income levels, weak institutional access, and poor infrastructure compared to mainstream populations.

However, very limited empirical studies have specifically examined the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this research gap.

III. RESEARCH GAP

A review of existing literature indicates that several studies have examined tribal development, rural livelihoods, poverty, education, and socio-economic conditions among Scheduled Tribes in India. Previous research has primarily focused on issues such as tribal marginalization, displacement, livelihood insecurity, educational backwardness, healthcare deprivation, and the impact of welfare programmes on tribal communities. Studies conducted by Walter Fernandes (2021), N. Lalitha (2022), and S. Mahendra Dev (2021) highlighted the persistent socio-economic challenges faced by tribal populations and emphasized the importance of livelihood diversification, education, and institutional support for tribal development.

However, despite the growing body of literature on tribal livelihoods and socio-economic development, very limited empirical research has specifically focused on the Yanadi and Irula tribes of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh. Most earlier studies have concentrated on broader tribal populations at the national or state level without providing micro-level analysis of specific tribal communities and their livelihood patterns. Moreover, existing studies have rarely examined the combined relationship between education, occupational diversification, welfare schemes, family size, and household income among these tribal groups using statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis.

There is also insufficient field-based evidence regarding the changing livelihood structure, income conditions, healthcare accessibility, housing status, and utilization of government welfare schemes among Yanadi and Irula tribal households in Chittoor District. The socio-economic transformations occurring due to modernization, migration, declining forest dependence, and changing rural economic systems remain inadequately documented in the context of these tribal communities.

Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this research gap by providing a detailed empirical analysis of the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. The study contributes to the existing literature by integrating socio-economic variables, livelihood characteristics, and statistical analysis to understand the factors influencing household income and livelihood diversification among tribal households. The findings of the study are expected to support evidence-based policy formulation and sustainable tribal development initiatives in the region.

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the livelihood patterns of Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District.
2. To analyse the socio-economic status of tribal households with respect to income, education, occupation, and housing conditions.
3. To study the impact of government welfare schemes on tribal livelihoods.
4. To identify the factors influencing household income and livelihood diversification among tribal communities.

Hypotheses of the Study

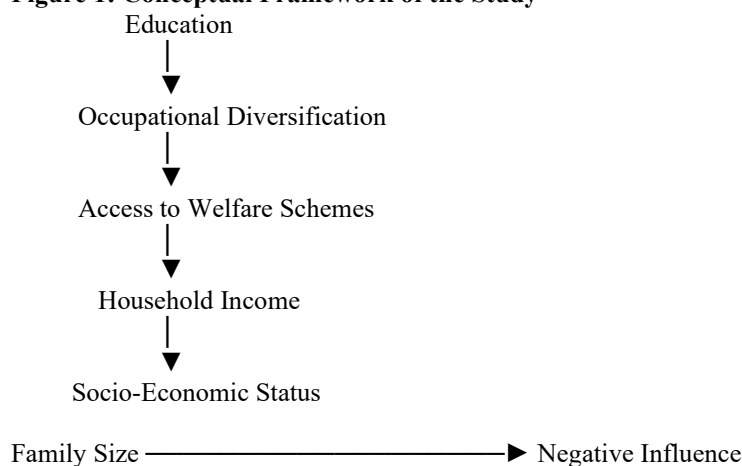
The study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. There exists a significant relationship between education and household income among tribal households.
2. Occupational diversification positively influences the socio-economic status of tribal communities.
3. Government welfare schemes have a significant impact on improving tribal livelihoods.
4. Family size negatively affects household economic well-being among tribal households.

Limitations of the Study

The study is confined to selected tribal habitations of Chittoor District and focuses only on Yanadi and Irula tribal communities. The findings are based on the responses provided by the selected households and may not represent all tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh. Time and resource constraints also limited the geographical coverage of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the present study explains the relationship between selected socio-economic and institutional variables influencing the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of Yanadi and Irula tribal households in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. The framework assumes that education, occupational diversification, and access to government welfare schemes positively influence household income and overall socio-economic well-being of tribal families.

Education is considered an important factor that enhances awareness, skill development, employability, and income-generating opportunities among tribal households. Higher educational attainment enables tribal communities to diversify their occupations beyond traditional and low-income livelihood activities.

Occupational diversification refers to the engagement of tribal households in multiple economic activities such as agricultural labour, livestock rearing, wage employment, forest-based activities, petty trade, and self-employment. Diversified livelihood opportunities contribute positively towards household income stability and economic security.

Access to welfare schemes includes utilization of government programmes related to employment generation, housing, education, healthcare, food security, and financial assistance. Effective participation in welfare schemes supports livelihood improvement and reduces socio-economic vulnerability among tribal populations.

Household income acts as a major determinant of socio-economic status by influencing living conditions, healthcare access, education, nutrition, and asset creation. The framework also recognizes family size as a negative influencing factor, as larger family size increases dependency burden and financial pressure on tribal households.

Thus, the conceptual framework highlights the interrelationship between educational attainment, occupational diversification, welfare support, and household income in shaping the socio-economic status of Yanadi and Irula tribes in the study area.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study is empirical in nature and focuses on examining the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of the Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized to achieve the objectives of the study. The research adopted a descriptive and analytical approach to understand the socio-economic conditions, occupational structure, income patterns, and access to welfare programmes among the selected tribal households.

Study Area

Chittoor District, located in the southern part of Andhra Pradesh, was selected for the study due to the significant presence of Yanadi and Irula tribal populations. The district is characterized by rural settlements, forest fringe villages, agricultural activities, and socio-economic diversity. Several tribal habitations in the district continue to experience inadequate infrastructure, limited employment opportunities, and poor access to education and healthcare services.

For the purpose of the study, tribal-dominated villages from selected mandals of Chittoor District were identified. The major villages covered under the survey include Yerravaripalem, Palamaner, Gangavaram, Peddapanjani, Kuppam, Gudipala, and Bangarupalem mandals where Yanadi and Irula tribal households are predominantly concentrated.

Sampling Design and Sample Size

A multistage sampling technique was adopted for the selection of respondents. In the first stage, tribal-dominated mandals and villages in Chittoor District were purposively selected based on the concentration of Yanadi and Irula tribal households. In the second stage, households were selected through simple random sampling techniques.

The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for finite populations to ensure statistical adequacy at a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error. A total of 120 tribal households were selected for the study comprising both Yanadi and Irula tribal communities.

Tribe-wise Sample Distribution		
Tribe	Number of Households	Percentage
Yanadi	70	58.3
Irula	50	41.7
Total	120	100.0

Survey Period

The field survey and collection of primary data were conducted during the period from **05.02.2026 to 31.03.2026**. Personal visits were made to the selected tribal habitations, and responses were collected through direct interviews with household heads and adult members of the families.

Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from tribal households using a structured interview schedule. Information relating to demographic characteristics, educational status, occupation, income levels, housing conditions, health facilities, livelihood activities, indebtedness, and awareness regarding government welfare schemes was collected through personal interviews.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from Census reports, Tribal Welfare Department publications, government reports, books, journals, research articles, district statistical handbooks, and official records related to tribal development and rural livelihoods.

Reliability Testing

To ensure the reliability and internal consistency of the research instrument, the structured interview schedule was pre-tested in selected tribal households outside the final sample area. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha technique. The overall Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was found to be **0.81**, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability of the instrument for socio-economic and livelihood-related variables.

Tools and Techniques of Analysis

The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analysed using appropriate statistical tools. Percentage analysis was used to describe demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships between selected socio-economic variables, while multiple regression analysis was used to identify the major determinants influencing household income and livelihood status among tribal households.

The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS software, and the results were presented through tables, charts, and interpretative discussions for better understanding of the socio-economic conditions of the selected tribal communities.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study analysed the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of Yanadi and Irula tribal households in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. The findings are based on primary data collected from selected tribal respondents regarding demographic characteristics, education, occupation, income, housing conditions, healthcare access, and participation in government welfare programmes.

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	56.7
	Female	52	43.3
Family Type	Nuclear	79	65.8
	Joint	41	34.2

The study revealed that a majority of the respondents belonged to the economically active age group of 25–50 years. Male respondents constituted a slightly higher proportion compared to female respondents. Most of the tribal households were nuclear families, although a considerable number of joint families were also observed in remote tribal settlements. The average family size was relatively high, increasing the dependency burden on earning members.

5.2 Educational Status

Table 2: Educational Status

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	42	35.0
Primary	39	32.5
Secondary	26	21.7
Intermediate	9	7.5

Educational attainment among the Yanadi and Irula tribes was found to be comparatively low. A significant proportion of respondents had only primary-level education, while illiteracy remained prevalent among older age groups, particularly women. School dropout rates were higher due to poverty, seasonal migration, lack of transportation facilities, and limited awareness regarding the importance of higher education. Very few respondents had completed secondary or collegiate education, thereby restricting access to skilled employment opportunities.

5.3 Occupational Structure and Livelihood Patterns

Table 3: Occupational Structure

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Agricultural Labour	48	40.0
Wage Labour	31	25.8
Forest Activities	18	15.0
Livestock	11	9.2
Self-Employment	12	10.0

The occupational pattern of the respondents indicated heavy dependence on agricultural labour and wage-based employment. Most tribal households relied on multiple livelihood activities for survival. Daily wage labour in agriculture, construction work, collection of minor forest produce, livestock rearing, and seasonal migration were identified as major sources of income.

A limited number of respondents were engaged in self-employment activities such as petty trade, handicrafts, and small-scale business operations. Livelihood diversification remained low due to lack of technical skills, financial assistance, and market access. The findings further revealed that employment opportunities were irregular and seasonal in nature, resulting in unstable household income.

5.4 Household Income and Economic Conditions

Table 4: Monthly Household Income

Income Level	Frequency	Percentage
Below ₹5,000	32	26.7
₹5,001–₹10,000	50	41.6
₹10,001–₹15,000	24	20.0
Above ₹15,000	14	11.7

The study found that the majority of tribal households belonged to low-income categories. Irregular employment, dependence on casual labour, and absence of permanent income sources contributed to economic insecurity among the respondents. Household expenditure was largely concentrated on food, healthcare, education, and debt repayment.

Many households experienced financial stress during non-agricultural seasons and depended on informal borrowing from local moneylenders. Indebtedness among tribal families was mainly associated with medical expenses, social ceremonies, and household consumption needs.

5.5 Housing and Basic Amenities

Housing conditions among tribal households reflected moderate to poor living standards. A majority of respondents lived in semi-pucca or kutcha houses with inadequate sanitation and drinking water facilities. Although some households benefited from government housing schemes, infrastructural deficiencies continued to persist in several tribal habitations.

Access to electricity and road connectivity had improved in certain villages; however, remote settlements still lacked adequate public infrastructure and transportation facilities.

5.6 Health and Healthcare Facilities

The findings indicated that healthcare access among tribal communities remained inadequate. Respondents reported limited availability of primary healthcare centres and shortage of medical personnel in tribal areas. Many households depended on government hospitals located at distant places, causing delays in medical treatment.

Malnutrition, seasonal illnesses, anaemia among women, and poor maternal healthcare were identified as major health concerns. Lack of awareness regarding nutrition and preventive healthcare practices further affected the health conditions of tribal families.

5.7 Awareness and Utilization of Government Welfare Schemes

The study observed moderate awareness regarding government welfare programmes among the respondents. Schemes related to housing, pensions, food security, education, and employment generation had positively influenced the livelihoods of some households. Programmes such as MGNREGA, subsidized ration distribution, tribal hostels, and self-help group initiatives contributed towards improving livelihood security.

However, lack of information, bureaucratic procedures, irregular implementation, and delayed benefits limited the effective utilization of welfare schemes in several tribal settlements.

5.8 Correlation and Regression Analysis

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Income
Education	0.58**
Occupation Diversification	0.46*
Welfare Schemes	0.39*
Family Size	-0.31*

*Significant at 5% level

** Significant at 1% level

Table 6: Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: Household Income

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Education	0.365	4.82	0.001
Occupation Diversification	0.284	3.54	0.003
Welfare Schemes	0.245	2.97	0.005
Family Size	-0.230	-2.68	0.009

Model Summary

- $R^2 = 0.62$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.59$
- F-value = 18.54
- $p < 0.001$

Statistical analysis revealed a positive relationship between education, occupational diversification, participation in welfare schemes, and household income. Respondents with higher educational attainment and diversified occupations reported relatively better socio-economic conditions.

The regression analysis indicated that education, occupation, and access to government welfare schemes significantly influenced household income among tribal households. Family size showed a negative relationship with economic well-being, indicating that larger families experienced greater financial pressure and dependency burden.

5.9 Overall Socio-Economic Status

The overall findings of the study suggest that the socio-economic status of the Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District remains economically vulnerable despite certain developmental improvements. Poverty, low educational attainment, inadequate healthcare, irregular employment, and limited livelihood diversification continue to affect the quality of life of tribal households.

Nevertheless, gradual improvements in housing, infrastructure, welfare support, and employment opportunities indicate positive socio-economic changes among some sections of the tribal population. The study highlights the need for targeted livelihood promotion programmes, educational advancement, healthcare accessibility, and effective implementation of tribal welfare policies for sustainable tribal development. About 41.6% of households earned between ₹5,001 and ₹10,000 per month, indicating the predominance of low-income livelihood systems among tribal communities.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the livelihood patterns and socio-economic status of the Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. The findings reveal that although tribal communities have experienced certain developmental improvements through government welfare programmes and rural development initiatives, a large proportion of households continue to face socio-economic vulnerability and livelihood insecurity. Traditional livelihood systems based on forest resources, agricultural labour, and seasonal employment remain the primary sources of income for most tribal families. However, declining dependence on forests, irregular employment opportunities, and inadequate access to productive resources have adversely affected their economic stability.

The study observed that low educational attainment, lack of vocational skills, poor healthcare access, and limited infrastructural facilities continue to hinder the socio-economic advancement of the tribal population. Illiteracy and school dropout rates remain high, particularly among women and economically weaker households, thereby restricting opportunities for occupational diversification and sustainable income generation. Most respondents continue to depend on low-paid wage labour and informal employment due to the absence of stable livelihood opportunities.

Government welfare programmes relating to employment generation, housing, education, food security, and social assistance have contributed positively towards improving the living conditions of tribal households. Schemes such as MGNREGA, tribal welfare hostels, public distribution systems, pensions, and housing assistance have provided partial economic support and livelihood security. Nevertheless, the benefits of these programmes have not reached all eligible households effectively because of inadequate awareness, administrative delays, and implementation gaps in remote tribal settlements.

The statistical analysis confirmed that education, occupational diversification, and access to welfare schemes positively influence household income and socio-economic status. In contrast, larger family size and dependency burden negatively affect household economic well-being. The study therefore emphasizes the importance of strengthening educational opportunities, skill development programmes, healthcare services, and livelihood diversification initiatives among tribal communities.

For sustainable tribal development, there is a need for integrated policy interventions focusing on employment generation, financial inclusion, infrastructure development, market access, women empowerment, and community participation. Special attention should be given to improving educational facilities, healthcare accessibility, vocational training, and entrepreneurship development among the Yanadi and Irula tribes. Effective implementation and monitoring of tribal welfare schemes are also essential to ensure inclusive growth and socio-economic empowerment.

In conclusion, the study highlights that while gradual socio-economic progress is visible among the Yanadi and Irula tribes in Chittoor District, substantial challenges related to poverty, unemployment, education, and healthcare still persist. A comprehensive and participatory development approach is necessary to enhance livelihood security and improve the overall quality of life of tribal communities in the region. The study recommends strengthening tribal education, expanding livelihood diversification programmes, improving healthcare infrastructure, enhancing market access, and increasing awareness regarding welfare schemes. Greater institutional support and participatory tribal development planning are essential for sustainable socio-economic transformation among Yanadi and Irula tribes.

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