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To study the socio-economic condition of tribal and non-tribal farmers in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh state

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Abstract

An analysis of socio-economic status of small landholders of Chhattisgarh plains in India is part of this study for the purpose of comparing tribal and non-tribal farmers in four blocks of Bilaspur district. Based on a sample of 320 respondents, it highlights major problems faced by farmers as smallholders including education inequalities, poverty levels, landhold-ownership, credit facilities and market conditions. It was found that the majority of tribal farmers were under the poverty line and were more likely to live in clusters, whereas the non-tribal farmers had somewhat better social and economic status. Both Tribal and non-tribal respondents participate in credit systems; nonetheless, the non-tribal farmers were more likely to get access to short-term credit, the concern therefore, became the financial success of the tribal farmers, who mainly did not own enough cultivating areas. The research findings call for immediate action to address the vital areas such as agriculture, financial mobilization, and infrastructure development solely depending on the gaining of food security and small farmer's improvement of living standards.

Keywords: Tribal and non-tribal, small farmers, socio-economic conditions, *etc.*

Introduction

The majority of the population always finds refuge in the agriculture sector, which is the foundation of the national economy. It also somewhat limits the migration of people from rural to urban regions and offers year-round work. Agriculture made up 17.8% of India's Gross National Product (GNP) in 2007–2008, while 70.0 per cent of the labor force worked in agriculture. The majority of the rural population in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh makes their living from farming, making agriculture a large part of the state's economy. Smallholder farmers, who oversee land holdings of less than two hectares, make up a sizable amount of agricultural output and dominate Chhattisgarh's agricultural landscape (Bose, 2014) ^[1]. Notwithstanding their vital role in the state's agricultural production, small farmers encounter a number of obstacles that limit their capacity to boost output and establish steady incomes. These issues include a lack of access to contemporary agricultural technologies, poor irrigation systems, climate change susceptibility, and trouble obtaining financial services. Since agriculture employs more than 70% of the state's population, the challenges encountered by small farmers have a significant impact on regional poverty reduction, rural employment, and food security (Economic Survey of Chhattisgarh, 2013). A vital component of Chhattisgarh's agricultural industry, small farmers mostly cultivate cash crops like cotton, soybeans, and sugarcane in addition to basic commodities like rice, maize, and lentils (Patel & Tiwari, 2011) ^[8]. Even Nevertheless, a lot of small farmers work in extremely vulnerable environments, which emphasizes the necessity for thorough studies and initiatives targeted at enhancing their socioeconomic circumstances.

The climatic vulnerability of Chhattisgarh is exacerbated by the state's reliance on rainfed agriculture. Small farmers are vulnerable to fluctuating weather patterns, such as irregular rainfall, droughts, and floods, as over 70% of agricultural land depends on monsoon rains (Kumar & Singh, 2014) ^[6]. Crop failure, economic loss, and food poverty are frequently caused by such climate uncertainties. For example, the state's agricultural output was negatively affected by the 2012 drought, which resulted in large financial losses for small farmers (Mishra, 2012) ^[7].

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Among the biggest obstacles facing small farmers in this problem is made more difficult by the lack of proper irrigation infrastructure, which prevents small farmers from implementing irrigation systems that may lessen the impact of unpredictable weather patterns. Many smallholders are still reliant on the whims of rainfall, making the situation dire despite government attempts to increase irrigation coverage (Ghosh, 2014) [4]. Small farmers are more susceptible to environmental shocks, have a harder time adapting to climate change, and are more likely to experience long-term poverty and food insecurity due to a lack of sophisticated irrigation methods and sufficient water supplies.

Small farmers sometimes lack the timely financial resources necessary to invest in modern agricultural inputs like machinery, fertilizer, and high-yielding crops. Their capacity to embrace new technology and raise agricultural output is hampered by their inability to obtain loans. Many small farmers are thus caught in a vicious cycle of low output and meager financial gains. Thus, the lack of loan choices makes it harder for small farmers to enhance their livelihoods and raise their revenue, exacerbating their financial difficulties. Another significant obstacle for small farmers in Chhattisgarh is market access. It is sometimes difficult for small farmers to sell their goods in larger markets due to the state's poor rural

infrastructure, which includes roads, storage facilities, and transportation networks. Consequently, they frequently depend on regional intermediaries who set prices and frequently take advantage of small farmers by providing them with cheap prices for their produce (Sharma, 2013) [9]. Insufficient market knowledge and transparency exacerbate the power imbalance between farmers and traders, making small farmers more susceptible to price volatility and market swings (Patel & Tiwari, 2011) [8].

Research Methodology

The present study is based on four blocks of Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh state - Kota, Marwahi, Lormi, and Gaurela-2. Two villages were selected from each block, having high number of non-tribal and tribal farmers, which were at a distance of 10 km from the block headquarters. Thus, a total of eight villages were selected for the study. 40 respondents were randomly selected from each village. There was a total of 40 respondents (20 tribal and 20 non-tribal small farmers) from each selected village. Thus, from the eight villages, 320 respondents were selected for the study purpose with the help of a random number sampling technique.

Results and discussion

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their educational level

S. No.	Education level	Tribal		Non-tribal	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	42	26.25	26	16.25
2.	0 up to 8 class	57	35.62	49	30.63
3.	Up to 10 class	38	23.75	37	23.12
4.	Up to 12 class	15	09.38	23	14.38
5.	Up to graduate/post graduate	08	05.00	25	15.62
	Total	160	100.00	160	100.00

It is observed from Table 1 that most (30.63%) of the non-tribal respondents were educated up to 8th class, followed by 23.12 per cent of the respondents who were educated up to 10th class. 16.25 per cent of the respondents were illiterate and 15.62 and 14.38 per cent of them were graduate/post graduate and had education up to 12th class, respectively. The data in Table also reveals that 35.62 per cent of the tribal respondents were educated up to 8th class. Whereas 26.25 per cent of them

were illiterate, followed by 23.75, 09.38 and 05.00 per cent of the respondents who were educated up to 10th class, 12th class and were graduates/post graduates, respectively.

It could be inferred that the majority of the small tribal farmers of the Chhattisgarh plain were literate. In comparison to non-tribal farmers, 10.00 per cent more tribal farmers were illiterate, and there were fewer graduates/postgraduates.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to caste

S. No.	Caste	Tribal		Non-tribal	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	General	00	00.00	37	23.12
2.	Other Back Ward Class	00	00.00	78	48.75
3.	Schedule Caste	00	00.00	45	28.13
4.	Schedule Tribe	160	100.00	00	00.00
	Total	160	100.00	160	100.00

It is apparent from the data in Table 2 that cent per cent of the respondents belonged to schedule tribe. Two separate samples consisting of non-tribals and tribals have been purposively chosen for doing a comparative study. Thus, none of the respondents appear in the other caste categories viz. general, other backward class, and schedule caste. Similarly, Table 2 also gives the caste wise breakup of non-tribal respondents. It could be seen that a maximum (48.75%) number of the respondents belonged to other backward classes followed by 28.13 and 23.12 per cent of them who belonged to scheduled

caste and the general category of caste respectively. As the study comprises of comparative analysis of non-tribal and tribal small farmers of Chhattisgarh plain schedule tribe respondents are shown in the non-tribal group of respondents.

It can be concluded that amongst the small non-tribal farmers of Chhattisgarh plain slightly less than half of them belonged to other backward class and it can be also said that all the respondents belonged to the scheduled tribe in the second sample under study.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents according to their family income

S. No.	Family Income	Tribal		Non-tribal	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Below poverty line (up to Rs. 25000 p.a.)	72	45.00	49	30.63
2.	Low-income group (Rs. 25001 to Rs. 50000 p.a.)	54	33.75	73	45.63
3.	Medium income group (Rs. 50001 to Rs. 75000 p.a.)	29	18.13	31	19.37
4.	High-income group (above Rs. 75000 p.a.)	05	03.12	07	04.37
	Total	160	100.00	160	100.00

It is observed from Table 3 data of tribal farmers of Chhattisgarh plain on the basis of their annual income. It can be seen that most (46.00%) of the respondents were below poverty line, 33.75 per cent of them belong to low-income group (Rs. 25001 to Rs. 50000 p.a.), 18.13 per cent belonged to medium income group (Rs. 50001 to Rs. 75000 p.a.) and only 03.12 per cent of them belonged to high income group (above Rs. 75000 p.a.). Similarly, the data presented in Table 3 also reveals that most of the respondents (45.63%) belonged to low-income group (Rs. 25001 to Rs. 50000 p.a.) followed by

30.63 per cent of the non-tribal farmers who were below poverty line (up to Rs. 25000 p.a.), 19.37 per cent of them belonged to medium income group (Rs. 50001 to Rs. 75000 p.a.) whereas only 04.37 per cent of them belonged to high income group (above Rs. 75000 p.a.)

It can be concluded that most of the tribal farmers were below poverty line. We may also conclusively state that the overall annual income of tribal farmers was less as compared to their non tribal counterparts of Chhattisgarh plain.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to their location of house

S. No.	Location of house	Tribal		Non-tribal	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Located individually	09	05.62	21	13.12
2.	Located in cluster/hamlets	97	60.63	65	40.63
3.	Located in centre of the village	54	33.75	74	46.25
	Total	160	100.00	160	100.00

It is observed from the data in Table 4 that majority (60.63%) of the tribal respondents had their houses located in clusters followed by 33.75 per cent of them who had their houses located in the centre of the village, whereas only 05.62 per cent of them lived in houses located individually. The data in Table 4 also reveals the distribution of non-tribal respondents according to their location of the house. The houses of most of them (46.25%) were located in the centre of the village, whereas 40.63 per cent of them reported that their houses were located in clusters/hamlets while 13.12 per cent of them reported that their houses were located individually.

It can be conclusively stated that the majority of the tribal farmers of Chhattisgarh plain lived in houses located in clusters/hamlets. Desai (1969) ^[3] also observed that caste also determines the type of houses its members reside in, their housing habits and the choice of the village where these houses are located. Similarly, most of the non-tribal farmers surveyed in Chhattisgarh plain had their houses located in the centre of the village. Chitambar (1997) ^[2] also stated that the people in a community live fairly close together in a more or less compact continuous but limited geographical area.

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents according to their credit

S. No.	Credit acquisition	Tribal		Non-tribal	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Acquired	128	80.00	139	86.87
2.	Not acquired	32	20.00	21	13.13
	Duration of credit				
1.	Short Term Credit	88	64.85	77	55.39
2.	Medium Term Credit	33	25.78	40	28.78
3.	Long Term Credit	12	09.37	22	55.39
	Type of Loan				
1.	Cash	32	25.00	46	33.09
2.	Kind	96	75.00	93	66.91
	Total	160	100.00	160	100.00

It is observed from table 5 that majority of the tribal respondents (80.00%) had also acquired credit, whereas only 20.00 per cent of them had not acquired credit. Out of those tribal respondents who had acquired credit, majority of them (64.85%) had acquired short term credit followed by 25.78 and 09.37 per cent of them who had acquired medium term and long-term credit respectively. The majority (75.00%) of them had acquired credit in kind whereas the remaining 25.00 per cent of them had acquired the credit in cash. Similarly, Table 5 also shows the distribution of non-tribal respondents according to their credit acquisition. It is revealed that the majority (86.87%) of the non-tribal respondents had acquired credit

whereas 13.13 per cent of them had not acquired any credit. Out of those (139) non-tribal farmers who had acquired credit majority (55.39%) of them had acquired short term credit, followed by 28.78 per cent of them who had acquired medium term credit and 15.83 per cent of them who had acquired long term credit. Out of those non-tribal respondents, who had acquired credit majority of them (66.91%) had acquired the credit in kind i.e. in the form of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides *etc.* whereas 33.09 per cent of them had acquired credit in cash. It can be concluded that the majority of the non-tribal respondents had acquired credit for short term and in kind.

It may be conclusively stated that the majority of the tribal

farmers of the Chhattisgarh plain had acquired credit for the short term and in kind. The findings also show that the majority of the non-tribal respondents had acquired credit for the short term and in kind. It was also revealed that most

respondents had acquired credit. These findings are not in agreement with the findings of others who found that the majority of the respondents had not acquired credit.

Table 6: Distribution of the respondents according to their credit

S. No.	Credit acquisition	Tribal		Non-tribal	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Land less	12	07.50	25	15.63
2.	Marginal (up to 1 ha.)	111	69.38	104	65.00
3.	Small (up 1.1 to 2.0 ha.)	37	23.12	31	19.37
4.	Medium (2.1 to 4.0 ha.)	00	00.00	00	00.00
5.	Big farmer (above 4 ha.)	00	00.00	00	00.00
	Total	160	100.00	160	100.00

The data in Table 6 shows the distribution of tribal respondents according to their land holding. It was found that the majority of the tribal respondents (69.38%) had marginal (up to 1 ha.) land holding followed by 23.12 per cent of them who had small (1.1 to 2.0 ha.) land holding whereas 7.50 per cent of them were landless and none of them (00.00%) were medium (2.1 to 4.0 ha.) or big farmer (above 4 ha.). Similarly, it is revealed from Table 6 that the majority of the non-tribal respondents (62.00%) had marginal (up to 1 ha.) land holding, followed by 19.37 per cent of them who were small (11 to 2.0 ha.) farmers whereas 15.63 per cent of them were landless agricultural labourers or contract farmers and none of them (00.00%) were medium (2.1 to 4.0 ha.) and big farmer (above 4 ha.).

It may be inferred that the majority of small tribal farmers of the Chhattisgarh plain had marginal land holdings. It may also be noted that lesser number of tribal farmers were landless as compared to non-tribal farmers surveyed and it may broadly be stated that tribal farmers were better placed than their non-tribal counterparts on the parameter of land holding. Gogoi and Phukan (2000) ^[5] revealed that a high degree of association was found between the size of land holding and the extent of adoption of improved rice cultivation.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, differences in the level of education were observed between non-tribal and tribal respondents. The majority of the non-tribal respondents belonged to the other backward classes. Tribal farmers were mostly below the poverty line and lived in clusters/hamlets. Both tribal and non-tribal respondents acquired credit, with non-tribal respondents favoring short-term credit. It is also observed that the majority of tribal and non-tribal farmers had marginal size of land holdings.

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