

**SOCIO – ECONOMIC STATUS OF FOLK ARTISTS IN SOUTHERN
DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
MADURAI AND THENI DISTRICTS**

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SYNOPSIS

Introduction

Tamil Nadu has a rich history of art of entertainment. The three modes of entertainment classified as Iyal (Literature), Isai (Music) and Nadagam (Drama). There are many forms of group and individual dances with the classical forms for popularity and sheer entertainment value. Majority of these dances are still thriving in Tamil Nadu. The Temple ceremonies and folk festivals celebrated in the state of Tamil Nadu include Naiyandi Melam, Thappu drums and performing arts of the Raja Rani dance. These arts may be learnt and delivered by people of Arunthathiyar and Paraiyar community who are Dalits. Folk artists live widely in different parts of the state. Dr.S.Somasundaram, President of the Federation of Associations of Folk artists said that 150 folk artists and art workers' groups are there in the state. Folk artists and art workers are registered under the Folk Artists Federation of State Trade Union, which works for the welfare of the folk artists in the state. The economic conditions of folk artists are very poor and they are suffering to improve their standard of living. Generally, folk artists face seasonal unemployment problem because, they have work only at the months of March, April, May, June, and July. They can earn only in these 5 months. Labour costs are managed throughout the year to keep the proceeds of life. In season times also, for about one month, they will have only fifteen events. Sometimes that is also uncertain. They do not get work permanently. During the election times, the King Queen dancers (Raja Rani Dancers) get opportunities. With this minimum level income they cannot meet the daily expenses of the family. They cannot find any other job other than this. So they are indebted for running family always live as a backward community. So the present research has made some efforts to study the socio economic conditions of folk artists in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu, especially in Madurai and Theni Districts.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Folk artists in Tamil Nadu, especially those living in southern districts like Madurai and Theni are very backward in education, employment and economic conditions. They do not know how to get the government allowances and offers. They earn only during festival seasons in the five months of March, April, May, June and July. They manage their family expenses spreading over a year with an income earned during these months. Therefore it may not be sure that they are engaged in at least fifteen events per month because the events are not permanent and continuous. The number of events differs from season to season. According to seasons, it may increase or decrease.

Another reason is that folk artists perform only folk arts and they cannot perform other jobs. Therefore they are unemployed during the period when they don't have an opportunity to perform folk arts. In the periods of unemployment, folk artists spend from borrowings. At the time of earnings they repay their principal amount with interest. They do not own agricultural lands. Hence they are unaware of agricultural activities. Moreover they are also not employed in agro-based activities. Government bans the events after 10 p.m during election periods and hence the activities of folk artists are largely affected during such periods. This leads to the situation of not earning income. Bus conductors do not allow folk artists such as Naiyandi Melam performers and Thappattam artists to travel by bus. Because it is feared that if the musical instruments are loaded in the bus, they will be disturbing the passengers. It compels folk artists to hire auto to carry their instruments. Even for 10 km travel, auto drivers charge Rs. 500 and above.

Southern districts are caste-based in nature. Madurai and Theni districts are caste-sensitive districts. Folk artists of both the districts are not exceptional. Most of the folk artists belong to dalit communities like Arunthathiyar and Parayar. While performing the art, they are discriminated by non-dalits. Folk arts are normally performed during night times. They consume alcohol, tobacco and pan parak in order to make themselves

untired. Hence they become drug addicts. The consumption of narcotics affects the health of folk artists. Thus the present study has made an attempt to study the Socio-economic conditions of folk artists in Madurai and Theni districts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this research is to elicit the socio-economic status of folk artists in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu with particular attention to Madurai and Theni districts. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of folk artists in Madurai and Theni districts
2. To analyse the health status of folk artists in the study area.
3. To understand the level of awareness about the fundamental rights among folk artists.
4. To analyse the problems faced by folk artists at work places.
5. To identify the government schemes for folk artists in Tamil Nadu.

HYPOTHESES

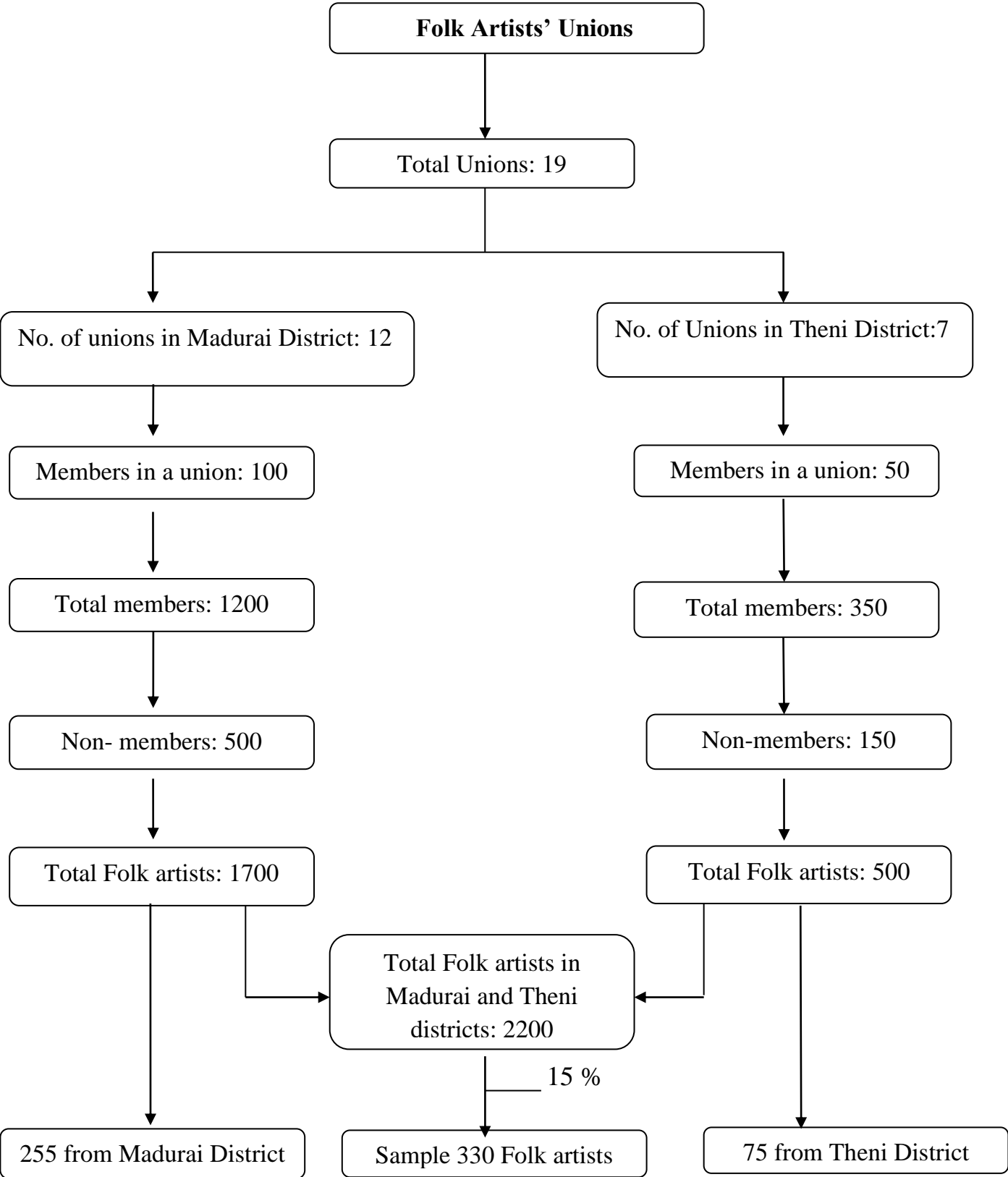
1. Educational level and income do not influence the health status of folk artists.
2. There is no significant difference in the health status among folk artists in the study area.
3. The welfare schemes implemented by the Government of Tamil Nadu do not change the life of folk artists.

CHOICE OF THE STUDY AREA

The study area chosen for the present study are Madurai and Theni districts of Tamil Nadu. In Madurai and Theni districts a particular community people (Arunthathiyar and Paraiyar) belonging to a same village are engaged in folk art by

forming unions. Oral discussion with the office bearers of folk artists' unions, reveal that there are nearly 19 such unions in the two districts. Hence these two southern districts have been chosen for the study. The sample design of the research work is as follows:

SAMPLE DESIGN



From the flow chart, it is known that the total number of folk art performers living in Madurai and Theni Districts is 2200. A sample of 15 per cent from the total population working out to 330 folk artists (255 from 1700 in Madurai district and 75 from 500 in Theni district) was selected for analysing the framed objectives of the study.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design has been adopted in this study. Purposive Sampling technique has been used to select the sample respondents. Three hundred and thirty (330) respondents were selected from Madurai and Theni districts of Tamil Nadu for this study. This study will be based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected after a fine rapport with the respondents through a well-structured interview that included both open ended and close ended questions. Secondary data was collected through government reports and NGOs, artists' associations, books, journals, magazines, internet, and news papers. Evaluation method was adopted for this study to verify the fact systematically and scientifically. The collected data was processed and analysed by using SPSS package and the appropriate statistical tools such as simple percentage analysis and regression test were used for analysis.

OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study may provide an insight into the social, economical, political, awareness about the fundamental rights, health status, education, employment, life style pattern, government schemes with respect to folk artists in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu, especially Madurai and Theni districts.

SCOPE OF STUDY

History says folk artists were respected earlier in the society but situation has changed and they now face discrimination and harassment. Fundamental rights are being

denied to them. Their social and economic conditions are far from satisfactory. In this context, the present study has been undertaken in Madurai and Theni Districts with the objectives of analysing social, economical, and political, awareness about the fundamental rights, health status, education and employment, life style pattern, and government schemes for folk artists.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is confined to only two Districts i.e. Madurai and Theni in Tamil Nadu. The size of sample is only 255 for Madurai and 75 for Theni. The sample size being limited, the result will hold true only to Madurai and Theni Districts in general. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized for the entire Tamil Nadu, as the Folk artists' structure, social, economical, and political awareness about the fundamental rights, health status, education and employment, life style pattern and government schemes for folk artists are varied at the State level.

PERIOD OF THE STUDY

The primary data for the analysis of variable were collected during the period from March 2018 to June 2018.

CHAPTER SCHEME OF THE STUDY

The present study entitled "Socio - Economic status of Folk Artists in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu with Special Reference to Madurai and Theni Districts" has been divided into six chapters.

Chapter I explains the introduction and important of Folk Arts, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypotheses, choice of the study area, scope of the study, methodology, outcome of the study, limitations of the study and chapter scheme of the study.

Chapter II discuss the previous literature available on the present study.

Chapter III relates to the Profile of the study area as Part A and Part B.

Chapter IV deals with the Socio - Economic status and health status of folk Artists in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu with Special Reference to Madurai and Theni Districts.

Chapter V is devoted to analyse the awareness of fundamental rights, problems faced by the folk artists and government schemes for their welfare.

Chapter VI dictates with the summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The significant findings, which are the result of the analysis of Chapter IV, are pointed out as under:

- Out of 330 sample respondents, Maximum 26.7 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 36-45 years, 26.1 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 26-35 years, 25.8 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 46-55 years, 15.5 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 15-25 years, and only 6.1 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of above 55 years respectively. The core age of the respondents is 15-45 years.
- The majority of the respondents (84.5 per cent) are male, 10.3 per cent are female and only 5.2 per cent of the respondents are transgender. Figure 4.2 presents the district-wise analysis of gender.
- It is found that 70.9 per cent respondents are residing in rural area and 15.8 per cent respondents are residing in urban and 13.3 per cent respondents are residing in semi urban areas. Majority of the respondents are living in rural areas.
- Out of 330 respondents, 85.2 respondents are married whereas 14.8 respondents are unmarried. Majority of the respondents are married.

- Out of 330 respondents, 89.1 per cent of the respondents are Hindus, 10 per cent is Christians and 0.9 per cent is Muslims. Majority of the respondents are Hindus in the study area.
- The majority 72.7 per cent of the respondents are Scheduled Caste members and 12.1 per cent respondents belong to Most Backward Classes (Naidu, Mutharaiyar and Muslims), and 15.2 per cent belong to Backward Caste. Majority of the respondents are involved in folk arts under Scheduled Caste.
- It is observed that 37.9 per cent of the respondents are Arunthathiyar and 34.8 per cent respondents are Paraiyar and 27.3 per cent respondents are Naidu, Mutharaiyar and Muslims. Majority of the respondents are Arunthathiyar who perform folk arts in Madurai and Theni Districts.
- The study found that 29.7 per cent respondents are illiterates, 28.2 per cent respondents completed middle level, 28.2 per cent respondents have higher secondary education, 9.4 per cent respondents have primary level education and 4.5 per cent of the respondents are graduates. It is further noticed that the majority of respondents are illiterates, followed by the respondents having middle school education and higher secondary level; each representing 28.2 per cent.
- The result of the regression analysis show that the educational qualification has increased by 0.228. This value is statistically significant at one per cent level. The value of adjusted R^2 is 0.66 and it implies that 66 per cent of variation in educational qualification is being explained by the variations in health status. Therefore, educational qualification of the folk artists has a positive relationship to their health in the study area. The P value is less than 5 per cent. So, null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. In this case, based on the probability value, alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and hence the educational level of respondents influences the health status of folk artists.
- Out of 330 respondents, 93 per cent of the respondents are full time artists and 7 per cent respondents are part-time artists. It is clear that the majority of the respondents are full time performers.

- It is seen that the respondents with five and above family members constitute that 10.9 per cent. About 12.1 per cent respondents have a family size of below 3 members and the majority of the respondents (77 per cent) have family members between 3 and 5.
- Out of 330 respondents, 70.6 per cent of the respondents have own houses, 13 respondents have been residing in rented houses, and 16.4 per cent of the respondents have been using Government houses. It is clear that most of the respondents have own houses.
- It is found that 56.7 per cent respondents are performing Paraiyattam, 22.4 per cent respondents are performing Naiyandi melam, 14.8 per cent respondents are performing Raja Rani Aattam and 6.1 per cent respondents are performing Karakattam. It is clear that more of the respondents are engaged with Paraiyattam
- The study explores that 0.9 per cent of the respondents earn income less than Rs. 10000. Likewise only 3.6 per cent of the respondents earn income Rs. 10001 and Rs. 20000, 43.6 per cent of the respondents earning income Rs.20001 and Rs. 30000, 10.3 per cent of the respondents earning income Rs. 30001 and Rs. 40000, and 41.5 per cent of the respondents earn income above Rs. 40000. Hence it is concluded that the income range of from Rs. 20001 to Rs. 30000 has been earned by majority of respondents (43.6 per cent).
- The results of simple liner regression model reveal that the annual income has increased by 0.624. This value is statistically significant at one per cent level. The value of adjusted R^2 is 0.87 and it implies that 90 per cent of variations in the annual income is explained by diseases of the respondent in the study areas. Therefore, annual income and diseases of the respondents have a positive relationship. The P value is less than 5 per cent. Hence the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the null hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. So in this case, based on the probability value, alternative hypothesis (H_1) says that the income level influences the health status of folk artists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions on the basis of the findings of the study are given below.

- The Government should take adequate measures to improve the economic situation environment of the folk artists.
- The government should issue identity cards to the folk artists.
- A separate Welfare Office should be set up in Theni district.
- Folk artists should be allowed in government buses, to bring their instruments to places of performance at free of cost.
- There should be no political interference in the awarding of State awards to folk artists. Award should be delivered on the basis of age and ability.
- The government should take efforts and enforce the existing laws to safeguard folk artists from the untouchability issue.
- Government should build free houses for rural folk artist.
- Folk artists need to be documented to arrange for state medical insurance.
- The state should give a wake-up call for folk artists to break free form drug addiction.
- The Government should provide protection to women and transgender people during their performance at high.
- Adult artists should be given a welfare subsidy.
- The government should raise the funeral fund for folk artists.
- Folk artists should be used in the government festivals so that income may be assured to them.
- Graduate Folk artists may be appointed as teachers in schools and colleges, if they are otherwise eligible.

CONCLUSION

Tamil Nadu is marked by its rich traditional heritage of Folk Arts and Culture. Since the days of remote past, the diversified art and culture forms generated by the

people of State, have continued to evince their creative magnificence. Apart from their outstanding brilliance from the perspective of aesthetics, the folk art and culture forms have played an instrumental role in reinforcing national integrity, crystallizing social solidarity, fortifying communal harmony, intensifying value-system and promoting the elements of humanism among the people of the country. However with the passage of time and advent of globalization, a synthetic homogeneous macro-culture has emerged. Under the influence of such a voracious all-pervasive macro-culture, the diversified heterogeneous folk culture of our country is suffering from attrition and erosion.

Folk artists living in Madurai and Theni districts of Tamil Nadu are economically backward. Most folk artists belong to the Dalit community and experience untouchability at the places where they perform. Some artists live in rented houses without homes. Folk artists are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes, cannabis and other drugs, as nighttime shows are more common. So they are more prone to infections. Welfare assistance for older artists is inadequate. The funeral fund for folk artists remains unchanged. The Government should pay special attention to all festivals by giving folk artists ample opportunities and improving them in the economic environment. Families who are well versed in teaching folk arts should be appointed as teachers in the Tamil Nadu Government schools and colleges to teach folk to the students and lessons on the folk arts should be included in textbook.

The folk artists are living in a deprived condition and their standard of living is largely determined by the folk art that they are performing. The poor earnings and low social status due to the engagement of folk arts have included many to choose some other job and the generational practices of transmission of folk art job has almost come to an end. This is seen the ruin of the folk arts. There is an immense need to sustain our culture which is largely reflected in folk performances. Thus, in a sense, protecting the folk artists will be the sustaining effort to protect Tamil culture.