



# **SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN – A STUDY IN PRAKASAM DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

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## **Abstract**

Indian society is overwhelmingly male-dominated. Women are dominated by men. As a consequence, it's only natural for an SC woman to feel oppressed by her husband and other males. She has to put in a lot of effort in order to provide for her family. She must endure atrocities perpetrated on her by her alcoholic husband, protect herself from the people with whom she works, and fight all forms of exploitation. As a result, SC women, in general, must fight multiple battles, one inside and one outside the home. Economic independence is especially important for scheduled caste women in this situation. In India, agriculture is the most common occupation for rural women. Scheduled Caste women make up the majority of the agricultural laborers. Her primary source of income is farm work. She is the source of primary income for the family. She provides for her family's daily needs by working in the fields of landowners for significantly less than the government's minimum payment. The socio-economic position of an individual can be measured using a variety of factors such as income, education, and type of profession, living circumstances, and other basic amenities, among others. The purpose of this article is to investigate the socioeconomic conditions of scheduled caste women in Andhra Pradesh's Prakasam district.

**Key Words:** Women, Scheduled Caste, Socio – Economic.

## **1. Introduction**

In a complex society like ours, women's status is not uniform. Women's standing has varied greatly across the Indian subcontinent, depending on cultural context, family structure, caste, class, occupation, and property rights, among other factors. All of these elements have a substantial impact on her ability to change her position in different groups. Scheduled caste women, who make up a significant portion of India's

population, face not just gender discrimination but also indignities originating from an age-old practice of untouchability, marginalization, and exploitation, from which the entire social group of scheduled castes suffers indecently.

Women from all areas and socioeconomic strata have performed worse than men in every set of indicators of development and socioeconomic condition. There is a clear distinction between male and female entitlements in terms of labor employment, earnings, education, health status, and decision-making capacity.

Economic empowerment is a prerequisite for women's ability to seek justice and equality. Women will not be able to exercise their guaranteed rights unless they have sufficient financial resources. As a result, equal involvement of women as equal partners with men in all domains of work is required, as is equal access to all positions of employment, equal possibilities for job-related training, and full protection of women at work.

When women are economically and socially empowered, they become change agents. In rural areas, women constitute the nucleus of the family, and they play a vital role not just in domestic tasks but also in other disciplines. Despite state and central government initiatives, inequalities continue in areas like education, health, property distribution, and resource management.

## 2. Review of Literature

**Sadana and Wandana (2015)** explain how Scheduled Caste women in India are denied their political, economic, cultural, and social rights. This document details numerous cases of sexual abuse, such as devadasis, which was prevalent in metropolitan areas. The miseries of Scheduled Caste women, based on their gender, caste prejudice, and economic destitution, are described in detail. The study delves deeper into the lives of Scheduled Caste women in India, including their economic and social situations.

**Tata Rao's (2014)** The study explains the socio-economic status of Dalit women, such as occupational status, educational status, health status, and present position of Dalit women. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have begun to work for improvement among Scheduled Caste women. Due to a few constitutional rights, the Panchayat has reserved one-third of the seats for women, which helps women take part in political power and decision-making. There has been a modest change for Scheduled Caste people now.

## 3. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper, to study the Socio - Economic conditions of Scheduled Caste Women in Prakasam district.

## 4. Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were used to examine the socio-economic situations of scheduled caste women in the study area. Four villages with the highest concentration of scheduled caste women in Ongole Mandal in the Prakasam district were selected from census data 2011. From the four villages, Throvagunta, Karavadhi, Koppolu, and Mukthinutalapadu were selected purposively. From each village a sample of 80, 70, 60, and 40 respondent homes were interviewed. As a result, a total of 250 sample households were chosen for the study. The socio-economic status of scheduled caste women in Prakasam district was analyzed by using a simple percentage method.

## 5. Result and Discussion

**Table – 1**

**Age wise distribution of sample respondents**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25	13	5.2
26 - 40	94	37.6
41 - 55	83	33.2
Above 55	59	23.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The respondents ages revealed that 94 (37.6%) are between the ages of 26 and 40 years, 83 (33.2%) are between the ages of 41 and 55 years, 59 (23.6%) are over 55 years, and 13 (5.2%) are under 25 years. Sample respondents of all ages were questioned in order to gather information from all age groups.

**Table – 2**

**Educational status of the respondents**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	86	34.4
Primary	91	36.4
Upper primary	39	15.6
High school	21	8.4
Intermediate	6	2.4
Graduation	4	1.6
Post graduation	3	1.2
Above post graduation	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

According to the above table, 91 (36.4%) of the respondents had primary level education, while 86 (34.4%) of the respondents were illiterates, and 39 (15.6%) of the respondents had upper primary level education, while 21 (8.4%) of the respondents had high school education. 6 (2.4%) of the respondents were intermediate, followed by 4 (1.6%) of the respondents who had graduated, and 3 (1.2%) of the respondents who had completed their post-graduation studies. It is found from the study majority of the sample respondents are illiterates due to lack of educational and infrastructural facilities in the study area.

**Table – 3**

**Occupation of the respondents**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	73	29.2
Business	16	6.4
Service sector	47	18.8
Seasonal/informal sector/employment/caste Based occupations	114	45.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The occupations of the respondents shows that is, majority of the respondents 114 (45.6%) are engaged in seasonal, informal sector employment and caste based occupations followed by, 73 (29.2%) are

engaged in agriculture, 47 (18.8%) are engaged in service sector and formal employment and the remaining 16 (6.4%) are engaged in business respectively.

It is evident from the study that majority of the respondents are in the informal sector due to seasonal occupation and not owning the land.

**Table – 4**

**Monthly income of the respondents**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Less than Rs. 500	73	29.2
Rs. 5001 to Rs.10,000	127	50.8
Rs. 10,001 to 25,000	33	13.2
Rs. 25001 to 50,000	17	6.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The above table explains the monthly income of the respondents. Following that, 127 (50.8%) of the respondents opined that their monthly income is between Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10,000. 73 (29.2%) of respondents stated that their monthly income is less than Rs. 5000, 33 (13.2%) of the respondents stated that their monthly income is between Rs. 10001 to Rs. 25000, and 17 (6.8%) of the respondents stated that their monthly income is between Rs. 25001 to Rs. 50000. The monthly income of the respondents clearly demonstrates that the vast majority of the respondents are poor due to poor economic status and lack of employment.

**Table – 5**

**Housing conditions of the respondents**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Pucca/RCC	197	78.8
Thatched house	53	21.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that the housing conditions of the respondents, 197 (78.8%) of the respondents opined that they have Pucca/RCC houses, whereas 53 (21.2%) of the respondents expressed that they have thatched house. Due to government support and help majority of the respondents had Pucca/RCC houses.

**Table - 6**

**Income spent by the family member**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Self	89	35.6
Husband	123	49.2
Children	31	12.4
Father/Mother in law	4	1.6
Others	3	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The above table explains the income spent by the family member, The majority 123 (49.2%) of the respondents opined that their family income is spent by husband, whereas, 89 (35.6%) of the respondents stated that the family income spend by themselves, whereas 31 (12.4%) of the respondents expressed that they spend their family income through children, whereas 4 (1.6%) of the respondents said that, the family income spend by father/mother-in-law. Since it is a patriarchal society husband takes a major role in spending the family income by himself.

**Table – 7**

**Respondents decision making choice**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Self	63	25.2
Husband	44	17.6
Both of them	143	57.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

From the above table result, it is clear that 143 (57.2%) of the respondents have taken family decision jointly both husband and wife, whereas 44(17.6%) of the respondents have taken family decisions by their husband. 63(25.2%) of the respondents have taken family decision by self. It found from the study that mutual understanding between husband and wife had given good result in decision making process.

**Table – 8**

**Conditions of Scheduled caste women due to welfare Schemes/Policies of the Government**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Improved	96	38.4
Not improved	112	44.8
It is as bad as before	24	9.6
Can't say	18	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The above table mentions that, 96 (38.4%) of the sample respondents have expressed that the conditions of the scheduled castes is improved considerably, 112 (44.8%) of the sample respondents have stated that the conditions of scheduled castes had not improved, 24 (9.6%) of the sample respondents have opined that the conditions of scheduled castes is as bad as before and the remaining 18 (7.2%) have not expressed their views on the same. Here the respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction about the social welfare policies of the government, as majority have not gained due to welfare policies formulated for the scheduled castes.

**Table – 9**

**Faced caste discrimination**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Social Discrimination	78	31.2
Restriction on entering public spaces	26	10.4
lower treatment at religious, cultural, and public functions.	103	41.2
Atrocities from forward caste peoples	11	4.4
Not faced any vulnerable situations	32	12.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

It is observed from the above table that, a few of the respondents have faced more than one type of bad situations and a few of the respondents have not at all faced such bad situations in the society due to their caste. Of all the respondents, 78 (31.2%) of the sample respondents have experienced social discrimination and alienation, 26 (10.4%) of the sample respondents have faced restrictions to enter into public places, 103 (41.2%) of the sample respondents have faced lower treatment at religious, cultural and public functions, 11 (4.4%) of the sample respondents have faced atrocities from forward caste people and about 32 (12.8%) of the sample respondents have not faced any of such bad situations in their life due to their caste. It is highlighted that even though social discrimination and lower treatment of the scheduled castes have banned long back, still it exists in the society as the majority have faced such situations in their life.

## 6. Conclusion and Suggestions

Basing on the analysis of the study it is found that the socio economic situation of scheduled caste women in the Prakasam district was not up to the mark. The study also found that the living conditions of households, belonging to scheduled caste women were deplorable. They were consistently disadvantaged in terms of access to essential services like education, employment and housing. Scheduled Caste women had a very low annual income, which contributed to their lower standard of living. It is recommended that there is a need to provide services available in the Prakasam district in order to improve the social and economic standards of the sample respondents. The government's major responsibility lies in addressing the problems of scheduled caste women at the local level. As a result, special programs for scheduled caste women in the Prakasam district should be created in order to integrate them into mainstreams of the society.

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