

IMPACT OF MODERNIZATION ON TRIBAL SOCIETY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Modernization is an important process of social change that increasingly influences the traditional institutions, cultural practices and economic activities of tribal communities. The present study, titled “Impact of Modernization on Tribal Society: A Sociological Study of Social, Cultural and Economic Transformation among Tribal Communities in Chamarajanagar District,” examines the extent to which modernization is associated with changes in the social, cultural and economic dimensions of tribal life. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and is primarily based on primary data collected from 60 selected tribal respondents through a structured interview schedule. The level of modernization was assessed through educational exposure, technological and digital exposure, mass-media exposure, transportation and mobility, occupational diversification, market participation, awareness of government programmes and exposure to urban society. Social, cultural and economic transformation was measured using appropriate five-point Likert-scale statements. Secondary information was obtained from Census publications, government reports, research studies, journals and other relevant sources. The collected data were analysed using percentage analysis, cross-tabulation and the Pearson Chi-square test. The hypothesis testing produced a Chi-square value of 27.692 with 4 degrees of freedom and $p < 0.001$, indicating a statistically significant association between the level of modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the research hypothesis was supported. The findings demonstrate that higher levels of modernization are associated with greater transformation in tribal society.

Keywords: Modernization, Tribal Society, Social Transformation, Cultural Transformation

INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities constitute an important component of India's diverse social and cultural structure and have historically maintained distinctive forms of social organisation, cultural traditions, livelihood systems and ecological relationships. Their social life has traditionally been shaped by kinship, community solidarity, customary institutions, indigenous knowledge and dependence on locally available natural resources. However, the expansion of education, communication technologies, transportation, markets, state welfare programmes, modern employment opportunities and urbanisation has increasingly connected tribal communities with wider society. These processes have created significant changes in traditional patterns of living and have contributed to the emergence of new aspirations, opportunities and social relationships. Modernization, therefore, represents an important sociological process through which tribal societies negotiate the interaction between traditional institutions and contemporary social, economic and technological forces.

Modernization has therefore emerged as an important process of social change among tribal communities. Its influence can be observed in changing aspirations, lifestyles, patterns of interaction, livelihood opportunities and engagement with contemporary institutions. At the same time, the

interaction between traditional tribal life and modern influences may produce both continuity and change, making modernization an important area of sociological investigation.

Chamarajanagar District provides a relevant context for examining these processes because its tribal communities are experiencing changing social and economic circumstances alongside continuing cultural traditions. The present study, “Impact of Modernization on Tribal Society: A Sociological Study of Social, Cultural and Economic Transformation among Tribal Communities in Chamarajanagar District,” therefore seeks to examine the nature and extent of modernization and its relationship with the broader transformation of tribal society. The study particularly focuses on understanding how contemporary social changes are reflected in the changing lives and experiences of tribal communities.

CONCEPTUALISATION AND EXPLANATION OF VARIABLES

In the present study, “Impact of Modernization on Tribal Society: A Sociological Study of Social, Cultural and Economic Transformation among Tribal Communities in Chamarajanagar District”, the level of modernization is conceptualised as the principal independent variable, while social, cultural and economic transformation constitute the major dependent variables. Modernization refers to the multidimensional process through which tribal communities experience increasing exposure to education, technology, mass media, transportation, markets, modern occupations, government institutions and urban society. The level of modernization is assessed through educational exposure, technological and digital exposure, mass-media exposure, transportation and mobility, occupational diversification, market participation, awareness of government programmes, and exposure to urban society. These dimensions collectively indicate the extent to which tribal households are integrated with modern social, technological and economic institutions. Higher educational and technological exposure may enhance knowledge and aspirations, while media and urban interaction can facilitate the adoption of new ideas, values and lifestyles. Similarly, occupational diversification and market participation indicate increasing integration with the wider economy.

Social transformation is considered the first major dependent dimension and refers to changes in the social organisation and relationships of tribal communities. It includes changes in family structure, marriage practices, gender roles, educational participation, social mobility, community participation, leadership patterns and interaction with wider society. Modernization may contribute to changes in traditional social institutions and encourage greater participation of women and younger generations in education, employment and decision-making.

Cultural transformation constitutes the second dependent dimension and refers to changes in traditional customs, rituals, festivals, beliefs, values, language, dress, food habits, indigenous knowledge and cultural identity. Modernization may result in the adaptation, modification or selective adoption of new cultural practices. Therefore, cultural transformation is understood not merely as cultural decline but as a process involving both continuity and change in tribal cultural life.

Economic transformation represents the third dependent dimension and refers to changes in occupational patterns, employment, household income, livelihood diversification, market participation, access to banking and financial services, consumption patterns, household assets and utilisation of government livelihood programmes. Modernization may reduce dependence on traditional livelihoods and create opportunities for wage employment, entrepreneurship and integration into formal markets.

For analytical purposes, the three dimensions social, cultural and economic transformation are combined to construct an overall measure of transformation of tribal society. The conceptual

framework therefore proposes that variations in the level of modernization are associated with corresponding variations in the extent of social, cultural and economic transformation. The framework provides the theoretical and empirical basis for examining whether higher levels of modernization are significantly associated with greater overall transformation among tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tribal communities have historically maintained distinctive social institutions, cultural traditions, indigenous knowledge systems and livelihood practices. However, increasing exposure to education, technology, mass media, markets, transportation, government institutions and urban society is bringing significant changes to traditional tribal life. These changes may create new opportunities for education, employment, economic mobility and social participation, while simultaneously influencing traditional family relationships, cultural practices, values and indigenous livelihoods. The nature and extent of these changes are not uniform across tribal communities and may vary according to their level of exposure to modernization. In Chamarajanagar District, where several tribal communities continue to maintain close links with traditional social and economic systems, there is a need to understand how modernization is influencing their contemporary way of life. Existing studies have largely examined specific aspects such as livelihood, socio-economic conditions or individual tribal groups, with limited emphasis on the interrelationship between modernization and multidimensional transformation. The present study therefore addresses the problem of understanding the extent to which modernization is associated with social, cultural and economic transformation among tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lokesha and Siddegowda (2020) examined the lifestyle of the Soliga tribe in B.R. Hills, Chamarajanagar District, Karnataka. The study provides important evidence regarding the distinctive social and livelihood characteristics of the Soliga community and the changes experienced by the tribe over time. Since the study was conducted specifically in B.R. Hills, it is geographically and sociologically relevant to the present research. The study demonstrates the continuing importance of the relationship between Soliga communities, their traditional environment and their livelihood practices. It provides a useful foundation for understanding the interaction between traditional tribal life and changing socio-economic circumstances. However, its focus was primarily on Soliga lifestyle rather than developing a systematic measure of modernization and examining its statistical association with social, cultural and economic transformation. The present study extends this perspective by examining modernization as a broader sociological process and empirically testing its association with transformation among tribal communities.

Manjunatha and Gangadhar (2021) examined the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Mysuru District, Karnataka, using secondary information. The study focused on the social and economic conditions of Scheduled Tribe communities and highlighted the continuing socio-economic challenges faced by tribal populations. The study is relevant to the present research because Mysuru and Chamarajanagar share important geographical and socio-cultural connections and contain several tribal communities with similar historical and livelihood contexts. Its findings provide useful background for understanding the socio-economic position of tribal communities in southern Karnataka. However, the study was based primarily on secondary sources and concentrated on socio-economic conditions rather than examining modernization as an independent variable and its relationship with social, cultural and economic transformation. This limitation creates scope for the

present study to provide primary empirical evidence from tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

Sasidharan (2023) examined livelihood transition and its socio-cultural and economic impact on the Kattunaika tribal community living in the tri-junction region of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The study compared tribal households following traditional and non-traditional livelihoods. The findings showed that non-traditional livelihood groups had greater economic integration, savings, social interaction, educational participation and political involvement, while traditional groups retained stronger cultural practices related to dress, language and rituals. The study also reported weakening of some traditional cultural practices among groups adopting non-traditional livelihoods. This study is highly relevant because it demonstrates how economic and livelihood changes can simultaneously produce social and cultural transformation, closely corresponding to the conceptual framework of the present study.

RESEARCH GAP

Existing studies on tribal communities in India and Karnataka have largely focused on socio-economic conditions, livelihood patterns, development programmes, education, cultural practices and the problems of specific tribal groups. Recent studies have documented changes among Soliga, Kuruba, Koraga and other tribal communities; however, limited empirical attention has been given to modernization as a multidimensional sociological process encompassing educational, technological, media, occupational, market and urban exposure. Furthermore, previous research has generally examined social, cultural or economic changes separately rather than analysing their combined transformation in a single conceptual framework. There is also limited primary empirical research specifically examining the relationship between the level of modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation among tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District. In particular, insufficient attention has been given to statistically testing whether variations in modernization are associated with differences in the overall transformation of tribal society. The present study addresses these gaps by developing a multidimensional assessment of modernization and examining its association with social, cultural and economic transformation among selected tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The study is essential for developing a comprehensive sociological understanding of the changing conditions of tribal communities under modernization. Tribal society is increasingly interacting with formal education, digital technology, mass media, markets, modern employment, government programmes and urban society. These processes may influence social relationships, cultural practices, livelihood patterns and aspirations. However, the effects of modernization may differ across households and social groups. Therefore, systematic empirical analysis is necessary to examine the nature and extent of social, cultural and economic transformation associated with modernization. The study is particularly relevant to Chamarajanagar District, where tribal communities possess distinctive socio-cultural traditions and livelihood systems. Its findings can enrich sociological literature and support policymakers and tribal welfare agencies in promoting education, employment, social inclusion and economic development while safeguarding important elements of tribal cultural identity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the level and major dimensions of modernization among tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

2. To analyse the association between modernization and the social, cultural and economic transformation of tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ There is a statistically significant association between the level of modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation among tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the impact of modernization on the social, cultural and economic transformation of tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District. The study is primarily based on primary data collected from selected tribal respondents through a structured interview schedule. A sample of 60 respondents will be selected using an appropriate sampling procedure to represent the tribal population covered under the study. The schedule will collect information on socio-demographic characteristics and major dimensions of modernization, including educational exposure, digital and technological exposure, mass-media exposure, transportation, occupational diversification, market participation, awareness of government programmes and urban exposure. Social, cultural and economic transformation will be assessed using appropriate five-point Likert-scale statements. Relevant secondary data will be obtained from Census publications, Government of Karnataka reports, Tribal Welfare Department records, District Statistical Handbooks, research studies, books, journals, these and other credible institutional sources. The collected data will be systematically classified, tabulated and analysed using frequency, percentage, cross-tabulation and Pearson’s Chi-square test. The level of significance will be fixed at 5 per cent ($p < 0.05$) to determine the statistical association between modernization and overall transformation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected from 60 tribal respondents in Chamarajanagar District were systematically analysed to understand their socio-economic characteristics and the processes of modernization and transformation. The analysis presents the demographic, educational, occupational and economic profile of the respondents. It also examines their access to digital technologies, awareness of government schemes, major problems and development needs. Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency and percentage analysis were used to present the findings systematically. Cross-tabulation and the Pearson Chi-square test were used to examine the association between modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation. The findings are presented through tables followed by concise interpretations to provide a clear sociological understanding of the study area.

Table 1: Socio-Economic and Employment Profile of Respondents (N = 60)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	34	56.7
	Female	26	43.3
Age	18–30 years	18	30.0
	31–45 years	24	40.0
	Above 45 years	18	30.0
Education	Illiterate	14	23.3
	Primary Education	18	30.0
	Secondary Education	20	33.3
	Higher Education	8	13.3
Monthly Income	Below ₹10,000	22	36.7

	₹10,001–20,000	24	40.0
	Above ₹20,000	14	23.3
Main Occupation	Agriculture	17	28.3
	Wage labour	21	35.0
	Forest-based activities	9	15.0
	Other occupations	13	21.7
Employment	Regular	13	21.7
	Seasonal	29	48.3
	Occasional	18	30.0
Landholding	Landless	17	28.3
	Up to 2 acres	27	45.0
	Above 2 acres	16	26.7
Digital Access	Regular use	25	41.7
	Occasional use	18	30.0
	No use	17	28.3
Government Scheme Awareness	High	15	25.0
	Moderate	24	40.0
	Low	21	35.0
Major Problem	Unemployment/irregular employment	41	68.3
	Low income	44	73.3
	Limited education	37	61.7
	Poor healthcare	35	58.3
	Poor transportation	39	65.0
	Limited market access	36	60.0
Major Suggestion	Regular employment opportunities	46	76.7
	Skill development	43	71.7
	Better education	41	68.3
	Improved healthcare	39	65.0
	Better transport facilities	40	66.7
	Better market facilities	44	73.3
	Awareness of government schemes	45	75.0

Source: Primary data

Table 1 presents the socio-economic, demographic and occupational characteristics of the 60 tribal respondents selected for the study. The gender distribution shows that males constitute a slightly higher proportion of the respondents (56.7%) than females (43.3%). Regarding age, the largest proportion belongs to the 31–45 years age group (40.0%), while respondents aged 18–30 years and above 45 years each account for 30.0%. Thus, the sample represents different age groups, providing a broader basis for understanding modernization and socio-economic transformation among tribal communities.

Educational status indicates that 33.3% of respondents have completed secondary education, followed by 30.0% with primary education. About 23.3% are illiterate, whereas only 13.3% have higher education. This distribution indicates that basic and secondary education has reached a substantial section of the respondents, although higher educational attainment remains comparatively limited. This may influence their access to employment, information, digital technologies and government development programmes.

The monthly income distribution reveals that 40.0% of respondents earn between ₹10,001 and ₹20,000, while 36.7% earn below ₹10,000. Only 23.3% earn above ₹20,000, indicating relatively low-income levels among a considerable proportion of respondents. In terms of occupation, wage labour is the major livelihood source (35.0%), followed by agriculture (28.3%), other occupations (21.7%) and forest-based activities (15.0%). Employment is predominantly seasonal (48.3%), while 30.0% have

occasional employment and only 21.7% have regular employment, reflecting considerable livelihood insecurity.

Landholding patterns show that 45.0% possess up to two acres, 28.3% are landless and 26.7% possess more than two acres. Digital access is relatively encouraging, with 41.7% reporting regular use of digital technologies; however, 28.3% have no digital access. Government scheme awareness is moderate among 40.0% of respondents, while 35.0% report low awareness, indicating the need for stronger outreach.

The major problems identified include low income (73.3%), unemployment or irregular employment (68.3%), poor transportation (65.0%), limited education (61.7%), limited market access (60.0%) and poor healthcare (58.3%). Correspondingly, respondents strongly suggested regular employment opportunities (76.7%), awareness of government schemes (75.0%), better market facilities (73.3%), skill development (71.7%), better education (68.3%), improved transportation (66.7%) and healthcare facilities (65.0%). Overall, the findings highlight persistent socio-economic and infrastructural challenges and the need for inclusive development interventions to support modernization and sustainable social, cultural and economic transformation among tribal communities.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

- ❖ There is a statistically significant association between the level of modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation among tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District.

MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

Level of Modernization was operationalised as a composite measure reflecting the extent to which tribal respondents were exposed to and participated in modern social, technological and economic institutions. It was assessed through indicators such as educational exposure, smartphone and internet usage, mass-media exposure, access to transportation, occupational diversification, market participation, awareness of government programmes, and exposure to urban society. Each indicator was assigned a score based on the respondent’s level of exposure or participation, and the total score was used to classify respondents into low, moderate, and high levels of modernization. Overall Social, Cultural and Economic Transformation was measured as a multidimensional construct comprising social transformation, cultural transformation, and economic transformation. Each dimension was assessed through multiple statements using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Social transformation covered changes in education, family relations, gender roles and social participation; cultural transformation included changes in traditions, customs, values, language and cultural practices; while economic transformation examined changes in occupation, income, employment, livelihood diversification and market participation. The combined scores of the three dimensions were used to classify respondents into low, moderate, and high levels of overall transformation.

Table 2: Level of association between Modernization and Overall Social, Cultural and Economic Transformation

Level of Modernization	Low Transformation	Moderate Transformation	High Transformation	Total
Low	14 (70%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	20
Moderate	5 (20.8)	14 (58.3%)	5 (20.8%)	24
High	1 (6.3)	5 (31.3%)	10 (62.5%)	16
Total	20	24	16	60

Source: Primary data

Table 2 shows a clear positive pattern between modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation among the 60 respondents. Among those with low modernization, 70% reported low transformation, while only 5% reported high transformation. Among respondents with moderate modernization, 58.3% experienced moderate transformation. In the high modernization group, 62.5% reported high transformation, compared with only 6.3% reporting low transformation. Overall, the findings indicate that higher levels of modernization are associated with greater levels of social, cultural and economic transformation among tribal communities.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test

Test	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-square	27.692	4	<0.001
N of Valid Cases	60		

The Pearson Chi-square analysis indicates a statistically significant association between the level of modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation among tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District. The obtained value of $\chi^2 = 27.692$ (df = 4, $p < 0.001$) is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The cross-tabulation further shows that respondents with low modernization predominantly reported low transformation, whereas those with high modernization largely reported high transformation. Thus, higher exposure to education, technology, mass media, markets, modern occupations and urban society is associated with greater transformation in tribal social, cultural and economic life. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is supported.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ The study finds that most respondents have primary or secondary education, while higher educational attainment is relatively low. This indicates the continuing importance of educational development among tribal communities.
- ❖ Seasonal and occasional employment are predominant, and low income and irregular employment are major socio-economic concerns among the respondents.
- ❖ Digital technology is increasingly reaching tribal communities, with 41.7% reporting regular digital use. However, 28.3% have no digital access, indicating the persistence of a digital divide.
- ❖ Low income, unemployment or irregular employment, poor transportation, limited education, healthcare difficulties and restricted market access are the major problems reported by respondents.
- ❖ The statistical analysis shows a significant association between the level of modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation ($\chi^2 = 27.692$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$), indicating that greater modernization is associated with higher levels of transformation.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- ❖ Government should improve access to quality schooling, higher education, scholarships, adult literacy and digital education to enhance educational opportunities among tribal communities.
- ❖ Skill-development programmes, vocational training, entrepreneurship support and sustainable livelihood opportunities should be promoted to reduce dependence on seasonal and irregular employment.
- ❖ Affordable internet connectivity, digital literacy programmes, digital financial services and community-level digital support centres should be expanded to reduce the digital divide.

- ❖ Greater attention should be given to transportation, healthcare, market connectivity and other essential infrastructure in tribal settlements to improve living conditions and economic opportunities.
- ❖ Tribal development policies should promote the benefits of modernization while protecting indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, community institutions and cultural identity. Development programmes should therefore combine economic and technological advancement with cultural sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that modernization is an important factor associated with the changing social, cultural and economic life of tribal communities in Chamarajanagar District. The findings indicate that education, digital access, occupational diversification, market participation, awareness of government programmes and interaction with wider society are contributing to changes in tribal livelihoods, social relations and cultural practices. However, challenges such as low income, irregular employment, limited education, poor transportation, healthcare constraints and inadequate market access continue to affect the overall development of the communities. The hypothesis testing provides significant evidence of this relationship. The Pearson Chi-square value of 27.692 (df = 4, $p < 0.001$) indicates a statistically significant association between the level of modernization and overall social, cultural and economic transformation. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is supported. The study recommends strengthening tribal education, employment and skill development, digital inclusion, healthcare, transportation and market facilities. At the same time, modernization policies should remain culturally sensitive and protect indigenous knowledge, traditions and community identity while promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

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