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Socio -Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Kadar Tribe of Anamalai Tiger Reserve

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a descriptive glimpse into the socio-economic and characteristics of the Kadar tribe who live in all six settlements within the Pollachi division of Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu viz., Kavarkkal, Nedungundru, Ethakuli, Erumparai, Theppakadu, and Udumanparai. The study reveals that the tribals have varying age distributions, gender and marital status. Primary education is the most common, with a significant portion engaged in agriculture. Low-income households rely on traditional livelihoods, and occupational diversity is limited. Access to government funds is limited, and housing consists of traditional 'kutcha' mud-houses.

Keywords: Kadar tribe; Anamalai Tiger Reserve; Socio-demographic status; Socio-economic status; Tamil Nadu

Apart from being a major tourist attraction, the Anamalai Tiger Reserve is also home to several tribal communities namely Malasar, Malai Malasar, Kadar, Eravallar, Pulayar and Muduvar who coexist harmoniously with the natural environment. The Reserve has a high level of anthropological diversity, with about 5000 tribal people from six indigenous groups living in 36 settlements. Of these, 19 settlements are from Pollachi division and the other 17 from Tiruppur division of Anamalai Tiger Reserve.

Kadars are only found in the Pollachi region of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve. There are just six Kadar settlements in total: Udumanparai, Kavarkkal, Ethakuli, Nedungundru, Erumparai, and Theppakadu. Tribals depend mostly upon the forest's flora and fauna and agriculture

for their livelihood (Bachan et al., 2011) The Kadars are essentially a food gathering tribe, content to live in their traditional way. However, modernization and development initiatives have brought changes to their traditional way of life. Increasing integration into mainstream society and engagement in wage labour activities has altered their livelihood strategies. Despite these changes, the Kadar tribe continues to face challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and basic amenities.

Recognizing the importance of addressing socio-demographic disparities and improving the well-being of tribal communities like the Kadar tribe, it is imperative for conservation initiatives in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve to consider socio-cultural factors. Sustainable development and

conservation outcomes can only be achieved through inclusive approaches that prioritize the needs and rights of indigenous communities. Hence this study was taken up to assess the socio-economic and demographics of the *Kadars*.

METHODOLOGY

The Kadar community of Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu is the focus of this study. The researcher reviewed the “Details of Settlement Population of Anamalai Tiger Reserve 2022” a Government-provided secondary data, which listed the names of settlements, communities, and the number of families within each settlement of the reserve. Using this information, the researcher visited each community to collect data and information in person. Primary data from all five Kadar settlements and every household was meticulously logged to ensure accuracy. An interview schedule was developed after a preliminary survey and pilot research, and all family members were present to provide input on each individual’s age and education level. In-depth analysis was conducted to derive relevant findings. The modified Kuppaswamy scale (Sood and Bindra, 2022) was used to assess the socioeconomic status of urban families in India, considering factors like income, education level, and household head occupation. The scale classifies families based on these factors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics

The data provided offers an extensive overview of various socio-demographic characteristics and living conditions across different settlements. Each settlement exhibits a diverse age distribution across different age brackets, ranging from infancy to elderly as mentioned below.

Age Distribution

The data reveal significant differences in age distribution in six settlements. Udumanparai II has the highest percentage of 19-40 years (31.5%), followed by Kavarkkal (41.5%) and Erumparai (14.2%). The 19-40 years age group represents the largest portion of the population, indicating a younger demographic. The 41-60 years age group also holds a significant share but is smaller compared to the younger cohort. The percentage of individuals aged 66 and above is low across all locations, suggesting a smaller elderly population. Udumanparai II consistently shows higher percentages in the younger age groups (19-40 and 41-60 years) compared to other settlements. Erumparai has lower percentages across most age groups, suggesting a smaller population or different demographic structure. Kavarkkal and Nedungundru display similar age distribution patterns with moderate percentages across various age groups. Understanding these demographic variations is crucial for effective social and economic planning.

Gender Distribution

The population in the surveyed area has a fairly balanced gender distribution, with males comprising 41.5% to 56.9% and females 43.1% to 58.5%. Females are slightly more prevalent in Kavarkkal and Udumanparai I, while males have a marginally higher presence in Nedungundru, Erumparai, Theppakadu, and Udumanparai II. This balanced distribution is crucial for developing targeted awareness, policies, and services, ensuring equitable outcomes in decision-making and resource allocation.

Marital Status

The majority of respondents in all locations are married, with Kavarkkal and Udumanparai I having the highest proportion. Theppakadu and Udumanparai II have lower percentages

of married individuals, but still significant. Unmarried respondents aged 25 and above have 3.7%-7.1%, with Theppakadu having a higher percentage. Widows/widowers range from 5.3%-14.8%, with Nedungundru and Udumanparai II having higher numbers. Most locations have zero or negligible representation of separated respondents. Understanding these marital status distributions is crucial for effective social welfare programs and community support initiatives.

Type of Family

The data show a preference for nuclear families over joint families in various settlements, with Nedungundru and Erumparai having the highest percentages. Udumanparai II has the highest percentage of joint families, while Kavarkkal has the lowest. These variations suggest cultural and socio-economic influences, with Kavarkkal having a higher nuclear family prevalence. These differences could affect community dynamics, resource distribution, and awareness strategies, requiring further exploration into cultural norms, economic conditions, and social preferences.

Family Size

Family sizes vary across settlements, with Kavarkkal and Nedungundru having primarily 3 member families, Erumparai having a higher percentage of larger families, Theppakadu having a significant proportion of 2 member families, and Udumanparai I and II leaning towards smaller families. Understanding these variations is crucial for social and economic planning, aiding in tailored awareness and resource allocation to meet community needs effectively.

In this case, one person is also considered family because, in social situations, a family unit can be defined as a single person living together, even though families typically consist of two or more individuals connected by blood or marriage,

particularly for statistical purposes especially when referring to homes.

Literacy Status

The literacy rates in various settlements are varying, with Nedungundru and Erumparai having high rates above 75%, Kavarkkal having moderate literacy, Udumanparai and Udumanparai II having good literacy rates but significant illiterate populations, and Theppakadu having 60% literacy. Despite these variations, there is room for improvement in literacy across Kavarkkal, Theppakadu, Udumanparai, and Udumanparai II.

Education

Education levels in various settlements vary significantly. In Kavarkkal, 43.4% of the population lacks formal education, with primary and middle school attendance at 11.3% and 15.1%, respectively. Nedungundru and Erumparai have fewer individuals without education, with significant proportions attending primary and high school. Theppakadu has a higher percentage of 36.9% lacking formal education but an even distribution across primary, middle, and high school levels. Primary education is the most prevalent, followed by high school, with higher education levels less common across all settlements.

Employment Status

The data shows varying employment rates across different settlements in India. Kavarkkal, Nedungundru, and Erumparai have the highest employment rates at 37.7%, but also face significant unemployment at 28.3%. Nedungundru and Erumparai have lower unemployment rates at 11.7% and 24.8%, respectively. Government funding supports a significant percentage of the population in these areas. Theppakadu, Udumanparai I, and Udumanparai II have higher employment rates at

46.3% to 52.3%, but lower unemployment rates between 12.3% and 14.7%. These settlements are likely influenced by local industries, job market access, and economic development efforts.

Government Funds

The Government of India provides various pensions to support tribal communities, enhancing their social security. These pensions include the Old Age Pension, Widow Pension, retirement pensions, and disability pensions. These pensions help reduce economic vulnerabilities, promote inclusivity, and ensure the well-being of marginalized tribal populations, fostering social equity and economic stability within these communities.

The data show disparities in old age and widow pension distribution across six settlements, indicating differences in eligibility and government support. Nedungundru and Udumanparai II have higher proportions of individuals receiving old age pensions, possibly due to larger elderly populations. Widow pension support is generally limited across all settlements, with low percentages in most areas. Understanding these variations can guide targeted awareness to improve social support systems.

House Type

The data indicates that in each settlement, all houses are of the *kutch* type, constructed either with mud or a combination of mud and stone, with roofs covered by sheets. This uniformity suggests a commonality in traditional building materials and methods across settlements,

possibly influenced by geographical, cultural, or economic factors.

Occupation

In Kavarkkal, Nedungundru, Erumparai, Theppakadu, and Udumanparai I and II, most individuals are either unemployed or engaged in agriculture, coolie, or estate work, indicating a reliance on traditional livelihoods. However, there are variations across settlements, with some showing higher percentages in specific occupations. Government job participation is notable in Nedungundru, Erumparai, and Udumanparai II, suggesting better educational access or government employment initiatives in these areas. Despite the prevalence of unemployment and traditional occupations, studying is significant in most settlements, reflecting an emphasis on education and future job prospects. Overall, the data reveals complex socio-economic dynamics within these communities, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for livelihood enhancement and economic growth.

Socio-Economic Profile

Table 1 provides a detailed socio-economic profile of settlements using the Kuppusamy scale, revealing patterns, disparities, and potential policy implications for community development and policymaking.

Monthly Income of the Family

The data show a high percentage of low-income households in all settlements, with Kavarkkal and Udumanparai I have the highest percentages.

Table 1. Socio-economic Profile of the Kadar Population

Sl. No.	Profile	Total score	Kavarkal		Nedugundru		Erumparai		Theppakadu		Udumanparai				
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	I		II		
											N	%	N	%	
1	Monthly Income of the Family	36,527 - 45,588	-	-	3	4.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	8.7
		21,914 - 36,526	-	-	9	14.3	5	13.5	1	4.0	1	7.1	-	-	
		7,316 - 21,913	4	17.4	23	36.5	17	45.9	5	20.0	2	14.3	7	30.4	
		≤ 7,315	19	82.6	28	44.4	15	40.5	19	76.0	11	78.6	14	60.9	
2	Profession of Head of the Family	Legislators, Senior officials and managers	-	-	1	1.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Professional	-	-	1	1.6	6	16.2	1	4.0	-	-	2	8.7	
		Technicians/ Associate professionals	1	4.3	10	15.9	8	21.6	1	4.0	-	-	-	-	
		Clerk	-	-	1	1.6	1	2.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Skilled workers, shop and market sales workers	-	-	3	4.8	2	5.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	16	69.6	16	25.4	11	29.7	17	68.0	8	57.1	11	47.8	
		Craft and trade related workers	-	-	1	1.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Elementary occupation	-	-	2	3.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Unemployed	6	26.1	28	44.4	9	24.3	6	24.0	6	42.9	10	43.5	
3	Education of Head of the Family	Professional degree	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Graduate	-	-	1	4.6	2	5.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Professional degree	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Graduate	-	-	1	4.6	2	5.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		Intermediate/ Diploma	-	-	-	-	1	2.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		High School	3	13.0	11	17.5	11	29.7	1	4.0	2	14.3	6	26.-	
		Middle School	1	4.3	12	19.0	2	5.4	3	12.0	3	21.4	3	13.0	
		Primary School	4	17.4	22	34.9	11	29.7	8	32.0	1	7.1	5	21.7	
Illiterate	15	65.2	17	27.0	10	27.0	13	52.0	8	57.1	9	39.1			

Understanding income distribution can inform targeted awareness needed to support low-income households.

Profession of Head of the Family

The survey reveals that skilled agricultural and fishery workers make up most family heads in surveyed settlements, except in Erumparai, where professionals and technicians/associate professionals are prevalent. Unemployment rates are high, especially in Nedungundru. Erumparai's diverse economic landscape highlights the need for economic diversification and job creation initiatives, especially in areas with potential for growth beyond agriculture. The variation in occupational diversity and unemployment rates highlights differing socio-economic dynamics, necessitating tailored awareness to effectively address local needs.

Education of Head of the Family

The majority of families are in lower socio-economic classes, indicating widespread economic challenges. The findings highlight the urgent need for literacy and adult education programmes to improve basic education levels and empower individuals. Addressing economic challenges requires targeted awareness, skill-building programs, social welfare initiatives, and improvements in healthcare and economic opportunities. Comprehensive socio-economic development strategies are crucial for uplifting families and improving overall well-being within tribal communities.

Socio-Economic Status

Data in Table 2 provide the socio-economic scoring of the population across all the five settlements mentioned.

Table 2: Socio-economic Classification of the Kadar Population

Sl. No.	Socio-Economic class	Total score	Kavarkkal		Nedungundru		Erumparai		Theppakadu		Udumanparai			
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	I		II	
											N	%	N	%
I	Upper	26-29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
II	Upper middle	16-25	-	-	3	4.8	4	2.9	-	-	-	-	2	8.7
III	Lower middle	11-15	1	4.3	13	20.6	14	10.2	3	12.0	1	7.1	3	13.0
IV	Upper lower	5-10	16	69.6	20	31.7	12	8.8	16	64.0	9	64.3	8	34.8
V	Lower	<5	6	26.1	27	42.9	7	5.1	6	24.0	4	28.6	10	43.5

The findings highlight the diverse socio-demographic and socio-economic landscape of Kadar community residing in Kavarkkal, Nedungundru, Erumparai, Theppakadu, and Udumanparai settlements. These settlements exhibit diverse age distributions, with a prevalence of younger populations. Gender distribution is

balanced, and marital status primarily consists of married individuals living in nuclear families. Education levels vary across settlements, with primary education being the most common. Employment status shows a significant portion engaged in agriculture/coolie work, with high unemployment rates in some areas. There's

a prevalence of low-income households, with a reliance on traditional livelihoods like agriculture. Occupational diversity is limited, with a majority engaged in skilled agricultural and fishery work. Access to government funds, particularly old age and widow pensions. Housing predominantly consists of kutch mud-houses, reflecting traditional construction methods. Literacy rates vary across settlements, with efforts needed to improve education levels, especially among illiterate heads of families. The study underscores the diverse socio-economic landscape and livelihood patterns across the surveyed settlements within the Anamalai Tiger Reserve. While some areas exhibit higher employment rates and educational attainment, others face challenges such as unemployment, low literacy, and limited access to government support. Erumparai stands out for its relatively higher employment rates and occupational diversity, indicating potential for economic growth. Theppakadu demonstrates resilience despite high unemployment, with a significant portion engaged in education, suggesting future workforce potential. Nedungundru and Udumanparai show intermediate patterns, indicating stability but room for improvement in education and employment opportunities. Kavarkkal presents opportunities for focused assistance to uplift its socio-economic profile, given its lower percentages in various indicators.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of tailored awareness and governmental support to address employment disparities, enhance education opportunities, and improve economic conditions across these settlements. By prioritizing inclusive development strategies, the aim is to empower tribal communities and ensure sustainable socio-economic progress while conserving the rich biodiversity of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve. The findings underline the necessity for specific facilities and governmental support that address employment inequities while also boosting education and economic opportunities to support holistic development across these settlements.

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