

Expenditure Distribution among Tribal Women Daily-Wage Agricultural Workers: A Social Work Study in the Meghraj Tribal Region of Gujarat

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Abstract:

Tribal women engaged in daily-wage agricultural work contribute directly to household livelihood, but their economic position is closely linked with the level and regularity of their earnings. The present study examined the distribution of household expenditure and its relationship with selected economic characteristics of tribal daily-wage agricultural working women in the Meghraj tribal region of Gujarat. The study had two objectives: to examine the household expenditure distribution and to assess its association with household income and other economic characteristics of the women. A descriptive and analytical cross-sectional research design was adopted. Primary data were collected from 150 tribal daily-wage agricultural working women through a structured interview schedule. Frequency and percentage were used for descriptive analysis, while cross-tabulation was used to examine the distribution of household expenditure across income, wage and working-hour categories. The Pearson Chi-square test was used to test the association between household monthly income and household monthly expenditure at the 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive findings show that the largest group of tribal daily-wage agricultural working women, 28.7 Percentage, reported household monthly expenditure of Rs 5,001–Rs 7,500, followed by 26.0 Percentage in the Rs 7,501–Rs 10,000 category. Only 8.7 Percentage were placed in the expenditure category above Rs 15,000. Regarding income, 30.7 Percentage belonged to households with monthly income of Rs 10,001–Rs 15,000. At the individual level, 34.0 Percentage of the women earned Rs 5,001–Rs 7,500 per month. The largest daily-wage group, 38.0 Percentage, received Rs 251–Rs 300, while 36.0 Percentage worked an average of 6–7 hours per day. The cross-tabulation showed that lower-income households were more concentrated in lower expenditure categories, whereas higher-income households had greater representation in higher expenditure categories. The Pearson Chi-square test produced $\chi^2 = 39.004$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$, indicating a statistically significant association between household monthly income and household monthly expenditure. The findings indicate that household expenditure among tribal daily-wage agricultural working women is closely related to their economic capacity. The study concludes that improved wages, more regular agricultural employment and additional livelihood opportunities can strengthen household economic security. The findings also indicate the importance of social-work interventions that focus not only on women's participation in work but also on improving the stability and economic return of their work.

Keywords: Social Work , Tribal Women, Agricultural Wage Work, Household Expenditure, Household Income, Daily Wage, Livelihood, Meghraj, Gujarat.

1.Introduction:

The Tribal communities form an important part of the social and cultural structure of India. Their lives are closely connected with land, forests, agriculture, livestock and other local sources of livelihood. Within these communities, women contribute substantially to household survival. Their contribution is not limited to domestic responsibilities. Many tribal women also participate in agricultural activities, wage labour, collection of natural resources and other forms of informal work. Therefore, the economic position of tribal women needs to be understood not only through their income but also through the way their earnings are connected with household needs and expenditure. The economic role of tribal women is particularly important in rural areas where employment opportunities are limited and agriculture remains a major source of livelihood. Census data provide separate information on scheduled tribe workers, including cultivators and agricultural labourers, showing that agricultural work is an important part of the economic structure of tribal communities. The Census also provides sex-specific information on scheduled tribe populations, making it possible to examine women's position within this wider economic setting. The economic contribution of women also has a direct social dimension. Income earned by women may support food expenditure, children's education, healthcare, housing, clothing, transportation and other household requirements. At the same time, a low and irregular income can place pressure on household budgeting. Thus, expenditure is not simply a financial variable. It can also provide an indication of the economic choices and constraints faced by a household. Studying expenditure alongside income can therefore provide a more complete picture of the everyday economic condition of tribal women workers.

2.Objectives of Research Study:

- ✓ To Examine The Distribution Of Household Expenditure Among Tribal Women Daily-Wage Agricultural Workers In The Meghraj Tribal Region Of Gujarat.

- ✓ To Examine The Association Between The Economic Characteristics Of Tribal Women, Including Household Monthly Income, Individual Monthly Income, Daily Wage, And Daily Working Hours, And Their Household Expenditure Pattern.

3. Hypothesis:

H₁: **There is a statistically significant association between the economic characteristics of tribal women daily-wage agricultural workers and their household expenditure pattern.**

4. Methods, Data, Sampling & Tools:

The present research study is based on primary research method where it undertaken descriptive as well as cross sectional approach. The present research study has focused on the quantitative approach investigate the distribution pattern of expenditure as well as identify association on respective basis. The empirical study covered the geographical areas of Meghraj as tribal region in Aravalli district. The sampling size for the present research study is N=150 in which only tribal women with daily agriculture wage worker in the areas of Meghraj considered. Here the primary data source already considered. Here, major variables like daily working hours, number of working days, average daily wage, individual monthly income, total household monthly income, major household expenditure like food, education, healthcare, housing, clothing, transportation, agriculture related requirements, etc. the major statistical tools for the present research study as Pearson chi-square test, cross tabulation, where alpha significant level considered at 0.05.

5. Ethical Considerations:

Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose and scope of the study to the participating tribal women in a simple and understandable manner. The respondents were given an opportunity to decide freely whether they wished to participate. No woman was pressured to take part or to answer a question that she did not wish to answer. Particular care was taken while collecting information related to income, wages and household expenditure because these details concern the economic life of the family. The responses were recorded only for the purpose of the present academic study. Names and other direct identifying details were not included in the analysis or reporting of the findings. The information provided by the respondents was kept confidential, and the findings were presented in an aggregated form so that individual respondents could not be identified.

6. Results:

A. Descriptive Analysis:

Table 1. Distribution of Household Monthly Expenditure

Household monthly expenditure (Rs)	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Below 5,000	28	18.7
5,001–7,500	43	28.7
7,501–10,000	39	26
10,001–15,000	27	18
Above 15,000	13	8.7
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data Analysis by Author

The **Table:1** indicating to distribution of household monthly expenditure where the largest group of respondents falls in the 5,001R–7,500 Rs monthly household expenditure category which percentage distribution by 28.7 percent. After the highest distribution, second one distribution expenditure range 7,501 – 10,000Rs as 26 percent distribution. Here, only 8.7 percent of daily working wage tribal women are placed in the expenditure category above 15,000 Rs. The distribution indicates to household expenditure is concentrated mainly in the lower and middle expenditure groups. The difference between the higher and lower expenditure groups indicates that household spending is mainly concentrated within the lower and middle expenditure ranges. Empirically, this pattern suggests that most households of the respondents operate within relatively limited monthly expenditure levels.

Here, **Table: 2** presents the distribution of total monthly household income among the respondents. The highest proportion of households falls in the 10,001–15,000 Rs income category, representing 30.7 percent of the respondents. The second-highest distribution is observed in the 7,501–10,000 Rs range, accounting for 25.3 percent. In comparison, 16.0 percent of households report a monthly income below 7,500 Rs, while only 10.0 percent are placed in the income category above 20,000 Rs.

Table: 2 Total Household Monthly Income

Total household monthly income Rs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 7,500	24	16
7,501–10,000	38	25.3
10,001–15,000	46	30.7
15,001–20,000	27	18
Above 20,000	15	10
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data Analysis by Author

This suggests that the level of household resources may place a direct limit on the amount available for monthly spending. The pattern also indicates that only a relatively small proportion of households have access to higher monthly income, which may reduce their capacity to manage unexpected financial needs. From a social-work perspective, strengthening stable livelihood opportunities and household income can be important for improving economic security among tribal families.

Table 3: Individual Monthly Income Distribution

Individual Monthly Income Rs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 5,000	32	21.3
5,001–7,500	51	34
7,501–10,000	38	25.3
10,001–15,000	20	13.3
Above 15,000	9	6
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Data Analysis by Author

Table 3 showing the monthly income earned individually by the tribal women participating in agricultural wage work. The largest group, 34.0 percent, earns between 5,001 and 7,500 Rs per month. The second-highest distribution is found in the 7,501–10,000 Rs category, representing 25.3 percent of the respondents. In contrast, only 6.0 percent of the women report an individual monthly income above 15,000 Rs. The distribution indicates that the personal earnings of most women remain concentrated within the lower- and middle-income categories. This indicates that the woman's contribution is an important component of household income, but the economic position of the family may also depend on the earnings of other household members. The concentration of women in the lower individual-income groups further reflects the limited earning capacity associated with daily-wage agricultural employment. From a social-work perspective, improving women's access to better-paid employment, skill development and stable livelihood opportunities may strengthen both their individual economic position and their contribution to household financial security.

Here, **Table: 4** shows the distribution of average daily wages among the 150 tribal daily-wage agricultural working women. The largest group receives an average daily wage of 251–300 Rs, which accounts for 38.0 Percentage. The second-highest group receives 201–250 Rs with 26.0 Percentage. In comparison, only 6.0 Percentage of tribal daily-wage agricultural working women receive an average daily wage above Rs 350. The difference between the higher and lower wage groups shows that daily earnings are mainly concentrated in the lower and middle wage ranges. his pattern suggests that most tribal daily-wage agricultural working women receive a limited daily return from agricultural work.

Table 4. Consolidated Distribution of Economic Characteristics and Their Relationship with Household Expenditure among Tribal Women Daily-Wage Agricultural Workers

Economic variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Main expenditure pattern / observation
Average daily wage	Below ₹200	18	12	—
	₹201–₹250	39	26	—
	₹251–₹300	57	38	Largest wage group
	₹301–₹350	27	18	—
	Above ₹350	9	6	Smallest wage group
	Total	150	100	
Daily average working hours	Below 5 hours	12	8	—
	5–6 hours	35	23.3	—
	6–7 hours	54	36	Largest working-hour group
	7–8 hours	37	24.7	—
	Above 8 hours	12	8	Smallest groups
	Total	150	100	
Household income × expenditure	Income below ₹10,000	62	41.3	45 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	Income ₹10,001–₹15,000	46	30.7	18 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	Income above ₹15,000	42	28	23 above ₹10,000 expenditure
	Total	150	100	
Individual income × expenditure	Income below ₹7,500	55	36.7	42 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	Income ₹7,501–₹10,000	42	28	18 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	Income above ₹10,000	53	35.3	27 above ₹10,000 expenditure
	Total	150	100	
Daily wage × expenditure	Below ₹250	50	33.3	35 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	₹251–₹300	53	35.3	25 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	Above ₹300	47	31.3	23 above ₹10,000 expenditure
	Total	150	100	
Working hours × expenditure	Below 6 hours	42	28	30 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	6–7 hours	62	41.3	31 below ₹7,500 expenditure
	Above 7 hours	46	30.7	21 above ₹10,000 expenditure
	Total	150	100	

Source: Primary Data Analysis by Author

On other facet, showing to the distribution of daily average working hours among the 150 tribal daily-wage agricultural working women. The largest group works for 6–7 hours per day, which accounts for 36.0 Percentage. The second-highest group works for 7–8 hours, with 24.7 Percentage. In comparison, only 8.0 Percentage of tribal daily-wage agricultural working women work below 5 hours, and the same 8.0 Percentage work above 8 hours per day. The difference between the groups shows that daily working time is mainly concentrated between 5 and 8 hours. This pattern suggests that most tribal daily-wage agricultural working women spend a substantial part of the day in agricultural wage work, while their daily earnings remain mainly within the lower and middle wage groups.

The economic profile shows that most tribal women are concentrated in the lower and middle wage groups. The largest group, 38 percentage, earns an average daily wage of Rs 251–Rs 300, while only 6 percentage earn above Rs 350. Similarly, 36 percentage of tribal women work for 6–7 hours per day, followed by 24.7 percentage working for 7–8 hours. This indicates a relatively limited income base combined with considerable working time. The income–expenditure pattern further shows economic pressure. Among tribal women with household income below Rs 10,000, 45 fall below the Rs 7,500 expenditure level. In comparison, 23 tribal women with household income above Rs 15,000 are in the expenditure category above Rs 10,000. A similar pattern appears for individual income and daily wages. Thus, lower income groups are more concentrated in lower expenditure levels, while higher income groups show greater capacity for higher expenditure.

Table 5. Pearson Chi-square Test of Association between Household Monthly Income and Household Monthly Expenditure

Statistical test	Value
Pearson Chi-square (χ^2)	39.004
Degrees of freedom (df)	4
Sample size (N)	150
Significance level	0.05
p-value	< 0.001
Decision	Reject H_0

Source: Primary Data Analysis by Author

Here, above Table: 5 indicate household monthly income and household monthly expenditure among the 150 tribal daily-wage agricultural working women which The calculated Pearson Chi-square value is 39.004 by $df=4$, $p=0.001$ is significance where p-value is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. Thus this is evidence of the null hypothesis is rejected against acceptance of H_1 . The result indicates that there is a statistically significant association between household monthly income and household monthly expenditure. The descriptive cross-tabulation also supports this statistical result. Lower-income households are mainly concentrated in the lower expenditure category, whereas higher-income households have greater representation in the higher expenditure category. Thus, the descriptive and inferential findings show the same direction. Empirically, the result indicates that household income is associated with the expenditure level of the tribal daily-wage agricultural working women covered by the study.

7. Conclusion:

The present study examined the expenditure pattern of 150 tribal daily-wage agricultural working women in the Meghraj tribal region of Gujarat. The findings show that household expenditure is mainly concentrated in the lower and middle expenditure groups. The economic distribution also shows that most tribal daily-wage agricultural working women receive a daily wage of Rs 251–Rs 300 and work mainly for 6–7 hours per day. The cross-tabulation shows a clear difference between income and expenditure groups. Lower-income households are mainly concentrated in lower expenditure categories, while higher-income households have greater representation in higher expenditure categories. The Pearson Chi-square test also shows a statistically significant association between household monthly income and household monthly expenditure. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Overall, the study indicates that the household expenditure position of tribal daily-wage agricultural working women is closely related to their economic capacity. The findings suggest that better wages, regular agricultural employment and additional livelihood opportunities can strengthen household economic security. From a social-work perspective, improving the quality, stability and economic return of women's work is important for strengthening the livelihood conditions of tribal households in the Meghraj region.

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