

# Impact Of Government Welfare Schemes On The Livelihood Of Palmyra Tappers In Thoothukudi District

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Palmyra tapping is one of the oldest traditional occupations in Tamil Nadu and serves as a major source of livelihood for many rural households in Thoothukudi District. Despite its economic, cultural, and ecological significance, palmyra tapping remains a vulnerable occupation due to irregular income, seasonal employment, occupational hazards, and limited access to institutional support. In this context, government welfare schemes have been introduced to improve the livelihood security and income sustainability of palmyra tappers. The present study aims to examine the socio-economic profile of palmyra tappers, assess their level of awareness regarding government welfare schemes, analyze the problems faced in availing these benefits, and evaluate the effectiveness of welfare schemes in improving their livelihood. The study is based on primary data collected from palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District using a structured questionnaire, supported by secondary data from reports, journals, and government publications. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and ANOVA were employed to test the formulated hypotheses. The findings reveal that awareness and effectiveness of welfare schemes vary significantly across income and experience groups, while procedural delays and lack of guidance remain major challenges in accessing benefits. The study concludes that although government welfare schemes have the potential to enhance income stability and livelihood security, improved awareness programs, simplified procedures, and stronger institutional support are essential for ensuring their effective implementation among palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District.

**Keywords:** Palmyra Tappers, Livelihood Challenges, Income Sustainability, Government Welfare Schemes, Rural Employment.

## INTRODUCTION

Palmyra tapping is one of the oldest traditional occupations in Tamil Nadu and plays a vital role in providing livelihood support to a large number of rural households. The Palmyra palm, often referred to as the “Kalpavriksha,” offers multiple economic benefits through the production of toddy, palm jaggery, palm sugar, palm leaves, fiber, and other value-added

products. In Thoothukudi District, palmyra tapping has been practiced for generations and continues to serve as an important source of income for economically weaker sections, particularly among rural and marginalized communities. Despite its socio-economic importance, the livelihood of palmyra tappers is characterized by irregular income, seasonal employment, occupational hazards, health risks, and limited access to modern technology and markets. Many palmyra tappers face challenges such as declining demand for traditional products, lack of value addition facilities, inadequate safety measures, and low bargaining power. Recognizing these issues, both the Central and State Governments have introduced various welfare schemes aimed at improving the living and working conditions of palmyra tappers. These schemes include financial assistance, health insurance, accident compensation, old-age pensions, skill development programs, subsidized equipment, and marketing support for palmyra-based products.

In Thoothukudi District, government welfare schemes are expected to play a crucial role in enhancing income stability, reducing occupational risks, and improving the overall quality of life of palmyra tappers. However, the actual impact of these schemes depends on factors such as awareness levels, accessibility, effective implementation, and beneficiaries' utilization of the benefits. There is a need to examine whether these welfare measures have effectively addressed the socio-economic challenges faced by palmyra tappers.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Ramasamy and Selvaraj (2022) examined the socio-economic conditions of traditional palmyra workers in southern Tamil Nadu. Their study highlighted that palmyra tappers largely depend on seasonal income and face severe occupational risks due to the manual nature of tapping activities. The authors found that although government welfare schemes such as accident insurance and old-age pensions exist, poor awareness and administrative delays limit their effectiveness. The study emphasized the need for better dissemination of information and simplified procedures to ensure inclusive access to welfare benefits.

Devi and Kumar (2023) focused on the role of government welfare schemes in improving the livelihood security of unorganized rural workers, including palmyra tappers. Their findings revealed that welfare measures like health insurance, financial assistance, and subsidized tools have a positive impact on income stability and working conditions when properly implemented. However, the study also pointed out that inadequate monitoring and lack of coordination between implementing agencies reduce the overall impact of these schemes. The authors suggested strengthening institutional support and local-level governance for effective scheme delivery.

Joseph and Prakash (2024) conducted an empirical study on traditional palm-based occupations in Tamil Nadu, with special reference to palmyra tappers. The study observed that government interventions have helped in providing minimum social security, but they have not significantly enhanced long-term livelihood sustainability. Issues such as limited skill development opportunities, poor market linkage for palmyra products, and absence of modern technology continue to affect the economic progress of tappers. The study recommended integrating welfare schemes with skill training and value-added product marketing to improve income prospects.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Palmyra tapping is a traditional and labour-intensive occupation that provides livelihood support to a significant number of rural households in Thoothukudi District. Despite its cultural, economic, and ecological importance, palmyra tappers continue to face multiple challenges such as low and irregular income, seasonal employment, lack of modern tools, occupational health hazards, and limited market access for palmyra-based products. The nature of the work exposes tappers to high risks, including accidents, long-term health issues, and physical strain, while social security coverage remains inadequate for many workers. To address these issues, the Central and State Governments have introduced several welfare schemes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of palmyra tappers. These schemes include financial assistance, health and accident insurance, old-age pensions, subsidized equipment, skill development programs, and marketing support. However, the effectiveness of these welfare schemes in improving the livelihood of palmyra tappers remains uncertain. Many beneficiaries are unaware of the available schemes, face difficulties in accessing benefits, or experience delays and inefficiencies in implementation.

In Thoothukudi District, there is limited empirical evidence on how far government welfare schemes have contributed to enhancing income security, improving working conditions, and ensuring social protection for palmyra tappers. The absence of systematic evaluation makes it difficult to identify gaps between policy objectives and ground-level realities. Therefore, there is a pressing need to study the impact of government welfare schemes on the livelihood of palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District. Such a study will help assess the effectiveness of existing welfare measures, understand the challenges faced by beneficiaries, and provide meaningful suggestions for improving policy implementation and ensuring sustainable livelihood development for palmyra tappers.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio-economic profile of palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District.
- To examine the level of awareness of palmyra tappers about various government welfare schemes.
- To identify the problems faced by palmyra tappers in availing government welfare benefits.
- To suggest suitable measures for improving the effectiveness of government welfare schemes for palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District.

## NULL HYPOTHESES

- ✓ **H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the Age profile of palmyra tappers and their level of awareness of government welfare schemes in Thoothukudi District.
- ✓ **H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the years experiences of palmyra tappers and the problems faced by palmyra tappers in availing welfare benefits in Thoothukudi District.
- ✓ **H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the Monthly Income profile of palmyra tappers and the effectiveness of government welfare schemes in improving their livelihood in Thoothukudi District.

## **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The present study focuses on examining the impact of government welfare schemes on the livelihood of palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District. The scope of the study is confined to understanding the socio-economic profile of palmyra tappers, including variables such as age, education, income, family size, and work experience. It also covers the assessment of the level of awareness among palmyra tappers regarding various government welfare schemes and the extent of benefits received by them. Further, the study analyzes the problems and constraints faced by palmyra tappers in accessing and availing government welfare benefits, such as procedural delays, lack of information, and administrative challenges. The scope also extends to evaluating the effectiveness of welfare schemes in improving livelihood aspects like income stability, employment security, and overall living standards. The study is geographically limited to Thoothukudi District, and the findings are based on primary data collected from palmyra tappers, supplemented by relevant secondary sources. The scope does not include a comparative analysis with other districts or states, and the results are applicable primarily within the selected study area.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the livelihood challenges and income sustainability of palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District, with special reference to the effectiveness of government welfare schemes. Both primary and secondary data are used for the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to palmyra tappers, covering aspects such as socio-economic profile, level of awareness of welfare schemes, problems faced in availing benefits, and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of government support in improving livelihood conditions. Secondary data were collected from government reports, policy documents, journals, books, and previous research studies related to palmyra tappers and welfare schemes.

The sample size consists of 70 respondents, selected using the convenience sampling method, considering accessibility and willingness of palmyra tappers to participate in the survey. The collected data were coded, classified, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Percentage analysis was employed to study the socio-economic profile of the respondents, while one-way ANOVA was used to test the relationship between age, years of experience, and monthly income of palmyra tappers with their awareness levels, problems faced, and perceptions of welfare scheme effectiveness. The analysis was carried out with the help of SPSS and MS Excel. The methodology thus ensures a systematic and reliable assessment of livelihood challenges and income sustainability of palmyra tappers in the study area.

## **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the Age profile of palmyra tappers and their level of awareness of government welfare schemes in Thoothukudi District.

<b>ANOVA</b>
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Factors		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I am aware of government welfare schemes meant for palmyra tappers.	Between Groups	3.806	3	1.269	2.380	.078
	Within Groups	35.180	66	.533		
	Total	38.986	69			
I have sufficient information about financial assistance schemes for palmyra tappers.	Between Groups	9.813	3	3.271	3.424	.022
	Within Groups	63.058	66	.955		
	Total	72.871	69			
I am aware of health insurance schemes provided by the government.	Between Groups	3.581	3	1.194	1.181	.324
	Within Groups	66.719	66	1.011		
	Total	70.300	69			
I know about pension schemes available for palmyra tappers.	Between Groups	9.100	3	3.033	2.407	.075
	Within Groups	83.186	66	1.260		
	Total	92.286	69			
Government departments effectively spread awareness about welfare schemes.	Between Groups	2.495	3	.832	.857	.468
	Within Groups	64.076	66	.971		
	Total	66.571	69			

**Source: Primary Data**

**Interpretation**

The one-way ANOVA was applied to examine whether the age profile of palmyra tappers has a significant relationship with their level of awareness of government welfare schemes in Thoothukudi District. The results reveal that a statistically significant difference exists only with respect to awareness about financial assistance schemes ( $p = 0.022$ ), as the p-value is less than 0.05. This indicates that awareness of financial assistance schemes varies significantly across different age groups of palmyra tappers, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for this factor alone. However, for other aspects such as general awareness of welfare schemes ( $p = 0.078$ ), awareness of health insurance schemes ( $p = 0.324$ ), knowledge about pension schemes ( $p = 0.075$ ), and the effectiveness of government departments in spreading awareness ( $p = 0.468$ ), the p-values are greater than 0.05, indicating no significant difference among age groups. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted for these factors. Overall, it can be concluded that age does not significantly influence the overall level of awareness of government welfare schemes among palmyra tappers, except in the case of financial assistance schemes, where age plays a significant role.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the years experiences of palmyra tappers and the problems faced by palmyra tappers in availing welfare benefits in Thoothukudi District.

ANOVA						
Factors		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Between Groups	3.667	4	.917	1.707	.159

Lack of proper information prevents me from availing welfare schemes.	Within Groups	34.904	65	.537		
	Total	38.571	69			
Complex procedures and documentation create difficulties in accessing benefits.	Between Groups	3.183	4	.796	.619	.650
	Within Groups	83.517	65	1.285		
	Total	86.700	69			
Delay in sanction and disbursement of benefits is a major problem.	Between Groups	8.529	4	2.132	2.600	.044
	Within Groups	53.314	65	.820		
	Total	61.843	69			
I face difficulty in approaching government offices for welfare assistance.	Between Groups	4.780	4	1.195	1.771	.145
	Within Groups	43.863	65	.675		
	Total	48.643	69			
Middlemen interference affects the timely receipt of benefits.	Between Groups	1.952	4	.488	.796	.532
	Within Groups	39.820	65	.613		
	Total	41.771	69			
Lack of guidance from officials discourages me from applying for schemes.	Between Groups	10.635	4	2.659	3.012	.024
	Within Groups	57.365	65	.883		
	Total	68.000	69			

**Source: Primary Data**

### **Interpretation**

The one-way ANOVA was employed to examine whether years of experience of palmyra tappers have a significant relationship with the problems faced in availing government welfare benefits in Thoothukudi District. The results indicate that significant differences exist for certain problem areas. Specifically, the factors “Delay in sanction and disbursement of benefits” ( $p = 0.044$ ) and “Lack of guidance from officials discourages me from applying for schemes” ( $p = 0.024$ ) show  $p$ -values less than 0.05, indicating that the severity of these problems varies significantly with the years of experience of palmyra tappers. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected for these two factors. However, for other problems such as lack of proper information ( $p = 0.159$ ), complexity of procedures and documentation ( $p = 0.650$ ), difficulty in approaching government offices ( $p = 0.145$ ), and middlemen interference ( $p = 0.532$ ), the  $p$ -values are greater than 0.05. This implies that these issues are perceived similarly by palmyra tappers irrespective of their years of experience, and the null hypothesis is accepted for these factors. Overall, it can be concluded that years of experience do not uniformly influence all problems faced in availing welfare benefits, but they significantly affect perceptions related to delays in benefit disbursement and lack of official guidance.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the Monthly Income profile of palmyra tappers and the effectiveness of government welfare schemes in improving their livelihood in Thoothukudi District.

ANOVA						
Factors		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Awareness programs should be conducted regularly at the village level.	Between Groups	5.163	4	1.291	1.239	.303
	Within Groups	67.709	65	1.042		
	Total	72.871	69			
Application procedures for welfare schemes should be simplified.	Between Groups	23.409	4	5.852	6.010	.000
	Within Groups	63.291	65	.974		
	Total	86.700	69			
Financial assistance should be increased to meet livelihood needs.	Between Groups	5.352	4	1.338	1.539	.201
	Within Groups	56.491	65	.869		
	Total	61.843	69			
Training and skill development programs should be provided to palmyra tappers.	Between Groups	1.908	4	.477	.663	.620
	Within Groups	46.735	65	.719		
	Total	48.643	69			
Government officials should provide better support and guidance.	Between Groups	6.789	4	1.697	3.154	.020
	Within Groups	34.982	65	.538		
	Total	41.771	69			
Welfare schemes should be monitored regularly to ensure proper implementation.	Between Groups	2.121	4	.530	.309	.871
	Within Groups	111.365	65	1.713		
	Total	113.486	69			

**Source: Primary Data**

### Interpretation

The one-way ANOVA was applied to examine whether the monthly income profile of palmyra tappers has a significant relationship with the perceived effectiveness of government welfare schemes in improving their livelihood in Thoothukudi District. The results reveal that significant differences exist for certain factors. In particular, the statements “Application procedures for welfare schemes should be simplified” ( $p = 0.000$ ) and “Government officials should provide better support and guidance” ( $p = 0.020$ ) show  $p$ -values less than 0.05, indicating that palmyra tappers belonging to different income groups differ significantly in their perception of these aspects. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected for these two factors, suggesting that income level influences views on procedural simplicity and official support. However, for other factors such as conducting regular village-level awareness programs ( $p = 0.303$ ), increasing financial assistance to meet livelihood needs ( $p = 0.201$ ), providing training and skill development programs ( $p = 0.620$ ), and regular monitoring of welfare schemes ( $p = 0.871$ ), the  $p$ -values are greater than 0.05. This indicates no significant difference among income groups with respect to these aspects, and the null hypothesis is accepted for them. Overall, it can be concluded that while monthly income does not influence all perceptions

uniformly, it significantly affects opinions related to simplification of application procedures and the need for better support and guidance from government officials.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings reveal that income level plays a crucial role in shaping palmyra tappers' perceptions regarding procedural efficiency and institutional support. Lower-income groups tend to emphasize the need for simplified application procedures and active guidance from government officials, as complex formalities and lack of support pose greater barriers for them in accessing welfare benefits. On the other hand, aspects such as awareness programs, training initiatives, and monitoring mechanisms are viewed similarly across income groups, indicating a common recognition of their importance irrespective of earnings. This suggests that while welfare schemes are broadly valued by all palmyra tappers, the ease of access and administrative support largely determine their effectiveness for economically weaker sections. Hence, improving procedural simplicity and strengthening grassroots-level official assistance can significantly enhance the impact of welfare schemes on the livelihood sustainability of palmyra tappers.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study on the livelihood challenges and income sustainability of palmyra tappers in Thoothukudi District highlights that palmyra tapping continues to be an important traditional occupation, but it is affected by several socio-economic and institutional challenges. The findings reveal that while palmyra tappers are generally aware of certain government welfare schemes, the level of awareness varies with age and income, particularly in terms of financial assistance and official support programs. Problems such as delays in sanction and disbursement of benefits, lack of guidance from government officials, and procedural complexities significantly affect the ability of tappers to fully utilize welfare schemes, especially among those with different levels of work experience. The study further indicates that the effectiveness of government welfare schemes in improving livelihood and income sustainability is not uniform across income groups. Simplification of application procedures and better support from officials are perceived as crucial factors in enhancing the impact of welfare measures. Overall, the study concludes that although government welfare schemes have the potential to improve the livelihood conditions of palmyra tappers, their effectiveness is constrained by implementation gaps, limited awareness, and administrative hurdles. Strengthening awareness programs, ensuring timely delivery of benefits, and providing continuous guidance and training can significantly contribute to improving income sustainability and the overall quality of life of palmyra tappers in the district.

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