Household Level Quality of Life among the Tiwa Tribe: A case study of Morigaon and Nagaon districts of Assam.

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Abstract: **Economic growth is not the only objective of policy-makers and policy-implementers of a nation. The development is not meant to increase the production of goods and services only, but to improve the quality of life of the backward section of the society. The real objective of this paper is to measure overall quality of life across occupations among the Tiwa tribe in Morigaon and Nagaon districts of Assam. This study is done on the basis of primary data collected randomly. Total 400 households are selected purposively and interviewed with the help of well structured questionnaire. This study has used OLS regression to find out the main determinants of household level quality of life of Tiwa people of Assam. Human Development Index (HDI) dimension index formula is utilised in computing dimension indexes of household level quality of life index (HQLI). It is found that occupations such as salaried households and households with self-employed in non-agriculture have shown better index value of all dimensions of HQLI compared to occupations such as agriculture and casual labour work. It is concluded that for better quality of life, the concerned departments of the government along with local representative bodies should work harmoniously.**

Keywords: **Quality of life, Tiwa tribe, Assam.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Economic growth or development both as a tool and outcome is not the prime objective of policy-makers and policy-implementers of a nation. The real objective of development is not the increase the production of goods and services, but to enhance human freedom [3] or increase people's development choices [4]. Human being is the centre of development. The prime objective of development is the expansion of people's choices and enhancement of their capabilities. The inquiry about the development of a nation or a region of the world, and about the quality of life of its residence just knowing about the per capita income will not take us far away. We need to know not only about the money they do or don't have, but a great deal about how they are able to conduct their lives. We have to know about their health care and medical services, nature and quality of education facility, nature of employment and way of rewarding labour, availability and quality of housing facilities, provision of water supply, drainage and sanitation, political freedom enjoyed by the people etc. Thus, the objective of development is to improve quality of life of the people of any society.

Assam is a melting pot of many ethnic groups, sub-ethnic groups, castes, tribes and different communities. The Tiwas are one of the many tribes of Assam of North-east India. Ethnically they belong to the Monogoloid race. The Tiwa tribe resides in the areas of Assam and Meghalaya. A remarkable peculiarity of the Tiwas is their division into two sub-groups i.e. hill Tiwas and plains dwelling Tiwas. The hill Tiwas reside in the western most area of Karbi-Anlong district (Assam) and north-eastern area of Ri-bhoi district (Meghalaya). Plain Tiwas mainly reside in the plains of southern bank of Brahmaputra Valley, in Morigaon and Nagaon districts. Tiwa tribe constitutes 5.17% of total tribal population of the state (Census, 2011).

Nagaon district is the centre of the entire North-Eastern India. With its headquarter at Nagaon town, the district covers an area of 3993 square km. The district shares boundaries with Sonitpur district and the river Brahmaputra in the North,

Karbi-Anlong and North-Cachar Hills in the South, east Karbi Anlong and Golaghat districts in the east and on the west it borders Morigaon district. The district lies between 25'-45" North to 26'-45"North Latitude and longitude 92'-33' to 93'-20' East. Nagaon is the second most populous district with 2,823,768 population (2011 census). In Nagaon, out of 1, 15,153 ST population, total Tiwa population is 58511 i.e. 50.81per cent of its total tribal population.

Morigaon is situated between 26.15 degrees North and 26.5 degrees North latitude and between 92 degree East longitude. Morigaon Town, the headquarter of the district is situated 78 Kms. from Dispur, the state capital. The district is bound by the mighty Brahmaputra River on the North, Karbi Anglong district on the South, Nagaon district on the East and Kamrup district on the West. Almost every year, Morigaon has been witnessing devastating floods causing huge loss of human lives, cattle and infrastructure. Recurring floods make the life of the rural people very difficult. The district has a population of 957,423 (2011, Census). Out of 1, 36,777 ST population in Morigaon district, total Tiwa population is 1, 09,530 i.e. 80.07 per cent of its total tribal population.

There is a rich body of theoretical and empirical studies analysing to measure and determine quality of life of the people. Some important in this context are (Rodgers and Converse, 1975) [6], (Panda and Misra, 2001) [7], (McCall, 1975) [8], (Diener and Suh, 1995) [9], (Sen, 1985) [10], (Sen, 1993) [11], (Sen, 2010) [12], (Morris and McAlpin, 1982) [13].

II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to measure overall quality of life across occupations among the Tiwa tribe in Morigaon and Nagaon districts of Assam in North East India. The results of the study are likely to be useful in framing policies and schemes for improving the overall quality of life of tribal people of Assam in particular and India in general.

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In order to measure the overall quality of life of Tiwa tribe, we have selected two districts - Morigaon and Nagaon of Assam. We have selected fifteen villages from Morigaon and Nagaon each, where Tiwa population is highly concentrated. The study is based on primary data collected randomly. Total 400 households are interviewed purposively with the help of well structured questionnaire for the study. To identify the main factors determining household level quality of life of the people concerned, we use OLS regression model. Quality of life is a relative term. There is no universally accepted definition for the term quality of life. In order to assess the physical quality of life, this study is carried out at household level. In assessing quality of life, this study considers four dimensions HQLI - economic, education, health and housing type of the people. Human Development Index (HDI) dimension index formula is utilised in computing all dimension indexes of household level quality of life index (HQLI). Overall household level quality of life index (HQLI) is the average of economic index (EI), education index (EDUI), health index (HI) and housing quality index (HQI).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Occupation is the main factor to improve the overall quality of life. People work primarily to achieve a decent standard of living. The income earned through occupations is usually spent on food and nutrition for the members of the family, on children's education and health of the family, procuring better housing and household's amenities etc. Thus there is a close link between work and quality of life of the people. All occupations are not able to enhance the quality of life of the people. Households engaged in agriculture and casual works are not able to have a decent standard of life.

Table-I: Households' Level Quality of Life Index among Tiwa People by Occupation.

Occupation	Max.	Min.	Mean	SD
Service	0.889	0.334	0.687	0.243
Self-employed in non-agriculture	0.822	0.311	0.584	0.231
Casual labour in non-agriculture	0.534	0.106	0.314	0.167
Casual labour in agriculture	0.489	0.097	0.299	0.123
Self-employed in agriculture	0.657	0.110	0.377	0.224

Source: Primary data.

Table-I reveals mean value of HQLI across occupations. HQLI is found highest for households with salaried job (0.687) while the same is lowest for households with casual labour working in agriculture (0.299). Self-employed households in non-agriculture have HQLI value with 0.584 which is much higher compared to self-employed household in agriculture 0.377. But casual labour households in non-agriculture have found very poor HQLI value at 0.314. These numbers itself reflect the fact that families depending on agriculture too do not have sufficient earnings and so they spend their life in poor living conditions. It also shows the fact that organised occupations such as salaried households and self-employed households in non-agriculture have sufficient income to spend in educational attainment and health improvement of the members. Of course, they have also had better housing and household amenities. Results reveal the fact that these two occupations have shown better index value of all dimensions of HQLI compared to unorganised occupations such as agriculture and casual labour work. It implied that HQLI varies across occupations.

Determinants of Households Quality of Life Index (HQLI)

The empirical result shows that the explanatory power of the regression equation as measured by R^2 is significantly high (R^2 =0.71). It implies that about 71 per cent of the variation in the dependable variable (monthly per capita consumption expenditure) is due to the explanatory variables taken in our model and the remaining 27 per cent is due to other unmentioned variables. The adjusted R squared value was 0.70. This indicates that 70 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the variations in the independent variables.

The regression result is shown in Table-II. In this regression model, household quality of life index is used as dependant variable. Presence of working women, availability of electricity, and use of LPG for cooking and number of working days under NREGA have positive and significant impact on the households level quality of life index. It shows that an additional increase of these variables raises household's level quality of life index. Flood dummy, informal sector occupation dummy, time taken to reach urban area and dependency ratio (DR) have shown statistically significant and negative impact on HQLI. More dependents create more burdens on household status and so it creates negative impact on HQLI. By an additional increase of these variables, QLI of the household reduce.

Table II: Determinants of Household Quality of Life Index (HQLI) of Tiwa Households (N=400)								
Variables	Model-I				Model-II			
	B	*SEB*	*t-ratio*	p-value	*B*	*SEB*	*t-ratio*	p-value
Flood Dummy	-0.13	0.02	-5.82	0.00	-0.13	0.02	-5.89	0.00
Distance to Urban Area	-0.001	0.0003	-3.66	0.01	-0.001	0.0003	-3.84	0.01
WWP	0.032	0.010	3.10	0.01	0.031	0.01	2.99	0.01
HT	0.051	0.024	1.33	0.18	-			
Main road Connectivity	0.0040	0.016	0.37	0.81	-			
Sex ratio	0.0003	0.0003	0.77	0.39	-			
DR	-0.0005	0.0003	-2.03	0.02	-0.0049	0.0003	-2.01	0.02
Occupation in Agriculture Dummy	-0.055	0.024	-2.29	0.02	-0.051	0.020	-2.41	0.01
Working days under NREGA	0.0007	0.0003	2.12	0.03	0.00076	0.00016	2.11	0.03
Electricity	0.061	0.019	3.30	0.01	0.059	0.018	3.42	0.01
LPG for cooking	0.071	0.017	4.01	0.01	0.070	0.018	4.06	0.01
Constant	0.41	0.05	8.52	0.00	0.42	0.04	10.5	0.00
	R-square	0.71	Akaike criterion	-1.55	R-square	0.71	Akaike criterion	-1.56

	Adjusted R^2	0.76	Hannan-Quinn	-1.51	Adjusted R^2	0.76	Hannan-Quinn	-1.54
	Log-likelihood	359.0	Schwarz criterion	-1.43	Log-likelihood	355.1	Schwarz criterion	-1.47
	F-statistic	111.0	Durbin-Watson statistic	1.11	F-statistic	139.00	Durbin-Watson statistic	1.05
	P-value (F)	0.00			P-value (F)	0.00		
Notes: Dependable variables- Household Quality of life index								
A dash (-) refers to the situation where corresponding insignificant variables are dropped								

Source: Primary data.

V.   CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Income is found, in this study, as a strong determinant of HQLI and that there is a positive relation between income and HQLI. Thus, keeping other factors constant, higher the income, higher shall be the mean level of HQLI and vice versa. So, to raise HQLI, income has to be increased. For it both the individuals concerned and the government have to take initiative. Individuals must be sincere and hard working to create more income earning opportunities, while the government and the private employers must create more employment opportunities. This will definitely augment their income which will improve the quality of their living. In addition, the accessibility and services like education and better health, housing facilities, basic amenities of life etc. should be ensured to have a better quality of life. The socio-economic development and improvement in the quality of life can achieve only by involving the tribal people themselves and the grass roots level institutions in the task of plan formulation and execution at the micro level. To achieve high human development, the necessity of transparency in governance, accountability and participatory must be observed. The Government, administrative machinery with local representative bodies along with social scientists should work harmoniously for overall improvement of the quality of life.

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