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Socio-economic profile of Pallai Adu goat farmers in the Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The present study examines the socio-economic status of Pallai Adu goat farmers in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, providing a comprehensive understanding of their livelihoods, challenges, and opportunities. Pallai Adu, a native goat breed known for its adaptability and resilience, plays a significant role in the rural economy of Tamil Nadu. Data were collected from a representative sample of farmers using structured interviews and field surveys, focusing on demographic characteristics, income levels, educational background, herd management practices, and market linkages. The findings reveal that most Pallai Adu farmers belong to marginal and small-scale farming communities, with goat rearing serving as a vital source of supplementary income. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions, including skill development, improved healthcare services, and market integration, to enhance the productivity and sustainability of Pallai Adu goat farming. Strengthening support systems for these farmers could significantly contribute to rural development and livestock sector growth in Tamil Nadu. This research provides valuable insights for policymakers, extension workers, and researchers aiming to improve the socio-economic conditions of goat farmers in the region.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Pallai Adu, Goat farmers, Tamil Nadu

1. Introduction

The use of unconventional feedstuffs especially in monogastric animal feeding continue to Goat farming is an integral component of rural livelihoods, especially among landless, small, and marginal agricultural households in India. It plays a vital role in providing income, generating employment opportunities, and enhancing the socio-economic status of rural communities (Moyo *et al.* 2010) [1]. Tamil Nadu, with its diverse goat populations, is home to several native goat breeds, including the Pallai Adu. This indigenous goat breed, primarily reared in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, is known for its adaptability to the region's agroclimatic conditions and its contribution to the rural economy.

India boasts a goat population of 148.88 million, with Tamil Nadu accounting for 9.9 million goats, reflecting a significant increase in population compared to the previous livestock census (20th Livestock census, 2019) [2]. Most goats in the region are either non-descript or a mixture of breeds, highlighting the need for better breed documentation and management practices. While recognized breeds like Kanni Adu, Kodi Adu, and Salem Black dominate the state, there exists an array of undocumented native breeds such as Pallai Adu, which hold immense potential for rural development through their economic and ecological adaptability. The Pallai Adu breed, prevalent in the southern regions of Tamil Nadu, is distinguished by its varied coat colors and traditional grazing practices, with minimal to no reliance on commercial feed supplements (Seevagan, 2024) [3].

Despite its significance, Pallai Adu goat farming has received limited research attention, particularly concerning the socio-economic conditions of its farmers. These farmers often depend on free-range grazing and traditional rearing methods, facing challenges such as inadequate veterinary services, financial constraints, and market uncertainties. Understanding the socio-economic dynamics of Pallai Adu goat farmers is crucial for devising targeted interventions that can improve the productivity and sustainability of this traditional farming practice.

The present study focuses on evaluating the socio-economic status of Pallai Adu goat farmers in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, shedding light on their livelihoods, challenges, and the potential for improving their economic well-being through strategic policy and extension efforts.

2. Materials and Methods

The present study was carried out in the breeding tract of Pallai Adu goats, covering the districts of Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, and Tenkasi in Tamil Nadu during 2023. A structured survey methodology was adopted to gather data on the personal and socio-economic profiles of Pallai Adu goat farmers. Data were collected through personal interviews using a pre-tested, comprehensive questionnaire designed to obtain both qualitative and quantitative insights. A purposive sampling method was employed to target farmers actively engaged in rearing Pallai Adu goats. The questionnaire focused on understanding the challenges faced by farmers, their income generation strategies, and the extent of their reliance on goat farming as a source of livelihood.

The gathered data were systematically tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distributions and percentages. These analytical methods provided a clear understanding of the socio-economic conditions and management practices followed by Pallai Adu goat farmers, enabling logical and actionable conclusions.

3. Results

The findings of the study are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2, which outline the goat farming practices among Pallai Adu goat farmers and their socio-economic profile, respectively. The study revealed that most Pallai Adu goat farmers (54.16%) purchased goats directly from farmers' houses, followed by 40.83% who relied on local shandies (markets), and 5.00% who procured goats through middlemen. Regarding farming experience, 33.33% of the respondents had 5-10 years of experience, while 31.66% had less than 5 years. Farmers with 10-15 years of experience accounted for 15.83%, and 19.16% had over 15 years of experience.

Table 1: Goat farming practices among Pallai Adu goat farmers

SL. No.	Respondent (N=120)	Frequency (F)	Per cent (%)
Mode of goat purchase			
1	From farmers house	65	54.16
2	From shandy	49	40.83
3	From middle men	6	5.00
Goat farming experience			
1	< 5 years	38	31.66
2	5-10 years	40	33.33
3	10-15 years	19	15.83
4	> 15 years	23	19.16

Among the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers, it was observed that 60% were male and 40% were female, indicating the significant participation of women in goat farming activities. The literacy rate among the farmers was 62.50%, while 37.50% were illiterate. In the southern region Singh *et al.* (2018) [4] stated that 39.40 percent farmers were illiterate, while 38.38 percent completed primary school; this finding is consistent with the current study. In terms of

landholding, 31.66% of farmers were landless, and 48.33% owned small landholdings of less than 2.5 acres. Medium and large landholders constituted 11.66% and 8.33% of the respondents, respectively. These results differed from other earlier studies by Verma *et al.* (2009) [7] in Malabari goats and Berari goats (Verma *et al.*, 2012) [8] stating that 51.90 percent and 53.04 percent of farmers were landless, respectively.

Table 2: Socio-economic profile of the Pallai Adu goat farmers

SL. No.	Profile (N=120)	Frequency (F)	Per cent (%)
Gender			
	Male	72	60.00
	Female	48	40.00
Literacy rate			
	Illiterate	45	37.50
	Literate	75	62.50
Land holding			
	Landless	38	31.66
	Small (< 2.5 acres)	58	48.33
	Medium (2.5 to 5 acres)	14	11.66
	Large (>5 acres)	10	8.33
Age			
	< 30 years	21	17.50
	30-50 years	65	54.16
	> 50 years	34	28.33
Occupation			
	Goat farming only	48	40.00
	Agriculture + Goat farming	39	32.50
	Integrated farming system	3	2.50
	Secondary	30	25.00
Family type			
	Nuclear	104	86.66
	Joint	16	13.33

The age distribution showed that 54.16% of the farmers were between 30-50 years, 28.33% were over 50 years, and 17.50% were under 30 years. Regarding occupation, 40% of the respondents relied solely on goat farming, 32.50% combined it with agriculture, 25.00% considered it a secondary occupation, and 2.50% followed integrated farming systems. The present result was closer to Verma *et al.* (2005)^[6] study on goat farmers in the Gujarat region. Additionally, most farmers (86.66%) belonged to nuclear families, with 13.33% coming from joint family setups. This finding is similar to that of Salem Black goat farmers reported by Thiruvankadan and Karunanithi (2006)^[5].

4. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Pallai Adu goat farming plays a vital role in supporting the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers in Tamil Nadu. The preference for purchasing goats directly from farmers and local shandies reflects the traditional nature of goat trade in the region. Strengthening these systems and introducing modernized trade mechanisms can improve marketing efficiency and profitability for farmers.

The diversity in farming experience among the respondents suggests a need for customized training programs catering to both novice and experienced farmers. The involvement of women in goat farming highlights the importance of gender-sensitive interventions, such as targeted training and financial support for women, to enhance their productivity and economic empowerment.

The high proportion of landless and smallholder farmers underscores the importance of goat farming as a primary livelihood source for resource-poor households. Focused efforts to improve access to veterinary care, financial assistance, and market linkages can greatly benefit these vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the large representation of farmers aged 30-50 years highlights goat farming's potential as a sustainable livelihood option for middle-aged individuals, with opportunities to attract younger generations through entrepreneurial support and capacity-building programs.

The predominance of nuclear families among respondents reflects changing societal structures, which may affect labor availability and management practices in goat farming. Promoting cooperative approaches and community-based support systems could mitigate these challenges while enhancing productivity. Overall, the study highlights the socio-economic importance of Pallai Adu goat farming and underscores the need for strategic interventions to sustain and improve this traditional livelihood practice.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Pallai Adu goat farming is a crucial livelihood for smallholder farmers in Tamil Nadu, with significant female participation. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as gender-sensitive training, financial support, and improved market linkages, to enhance productivity and empower farmers.

Conflict of Interest: Not available

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