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MICROLEVEL STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE, INCOME LEVEL AND LAND PROPERTIES: A CASE STUDY FROM KAKDWIP BLOCK, SOUTH 24PARGANA, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

South 24 Parganas district is divided into two distinct physiographic zones: the marine-riverine delta in the north and the marine delta zone in the south. As the sea receded southwards, in the sub-recent geological period, a large low-lying plain got exposed. Both tidal inflows and the rivers have been depositing sediments in this plain. Annual dependency on a particular way of earning a livelihood is a rare phenomenon in the studied region. Due to frequent occurrence of torrential rains and thunder storms and occasional unprecedented natural calamities, psychologically the population is trying to be prepared with an alternative source of income. It is important to develop socio-economic resilience. They fluctuate in between farming, fishing, cottage industry and other possibilities to meet out their need. Sometimes these even end up in relocating with or without families in search of earning. In a way, livelihood has to be reached for which slowly and steadily the residents have prepared themselves mentally to resist and fight back with every odds of life and restart again as and when needed. However there lies difference in the socio-economic adaptation of the natural and non-natural resources to build such resilience.

Keywords: South 24 Parganas, Kakdwip, Occupational profile, Income level, Land property

INTRODUCTION:

Kakdwip area lies mostly in the maritime delta provinces where there is great varisity of life and various impacts of environmental and climatic hazards. Such adverse events in low income countries almost drain the economic condition and result in loss of social standards (Reddy, 2015; Szabo et al., 2016; Rudra and Chattopadhyay 2020). The occupational profile is a summary of population's occupational history and experiences, patterns of daily living, interests, values, needs, and relevant contexts” (AOTA, 2020). The occupational profile helps to create a summary of a group viewed as an occupational being. This attempt also organizes the evaluation of all the activities the population does or wants to do but has difficulty with or cannot do, and frames the process by help of inductive reasoning. This indirectly brings into the development of the region by government endorsements and other helping aids. The distribution and growth of occupations are key economic indicators that can show the income potential and diversification of a local economy. Employment forecasts tend to identify key growth sectors, and target occupations that will provide the bulk of job openings to local economies. Occupational performance issues (OPIs) are defined by Townsend and Polatajko (2013) as “an actual or potential issue (or problem) in the [person's] ability to choose, organize, and satisfactorily perform meaningful occupations”. The occupational pattern helps to understand better how an assembly of activities and occupations gets interconnected with each other in order to achieve a unifying goal by adding value to the social environment. Keeping in mind the idea of growth and development, the region makes their own initiative in proper living and betterment through the occupation. Thus it is an important aspect as how one perceives in better living and contributing to the socio-economic development. On the other hand pisciculture and other cottage industries are slowly and steadily taking their position to bring in some economic relief. The idea behind this micro study is to analyse the socio-economic condition of the locality and their alternative sources of livelihood for development and progress of this region.

LOCATION

The location of Kakdwip block is in the south eastern part of Sundarban area. Hoogly River which is flowing through the western part of the district makes maximum settlements to come under village like composition (Fig. 1). The latitudinal and longitudinal extension of Kakdwip block is 21°52'34"N 88°11'07"E. Kakdwip block is bounded by Kulpi block in the north, Namkhana and Sagar blocks in the south, Nandigram-I, block in Purba Medinipur district, across the Hooghly estuary in the west and the Patharpratima block in the east.

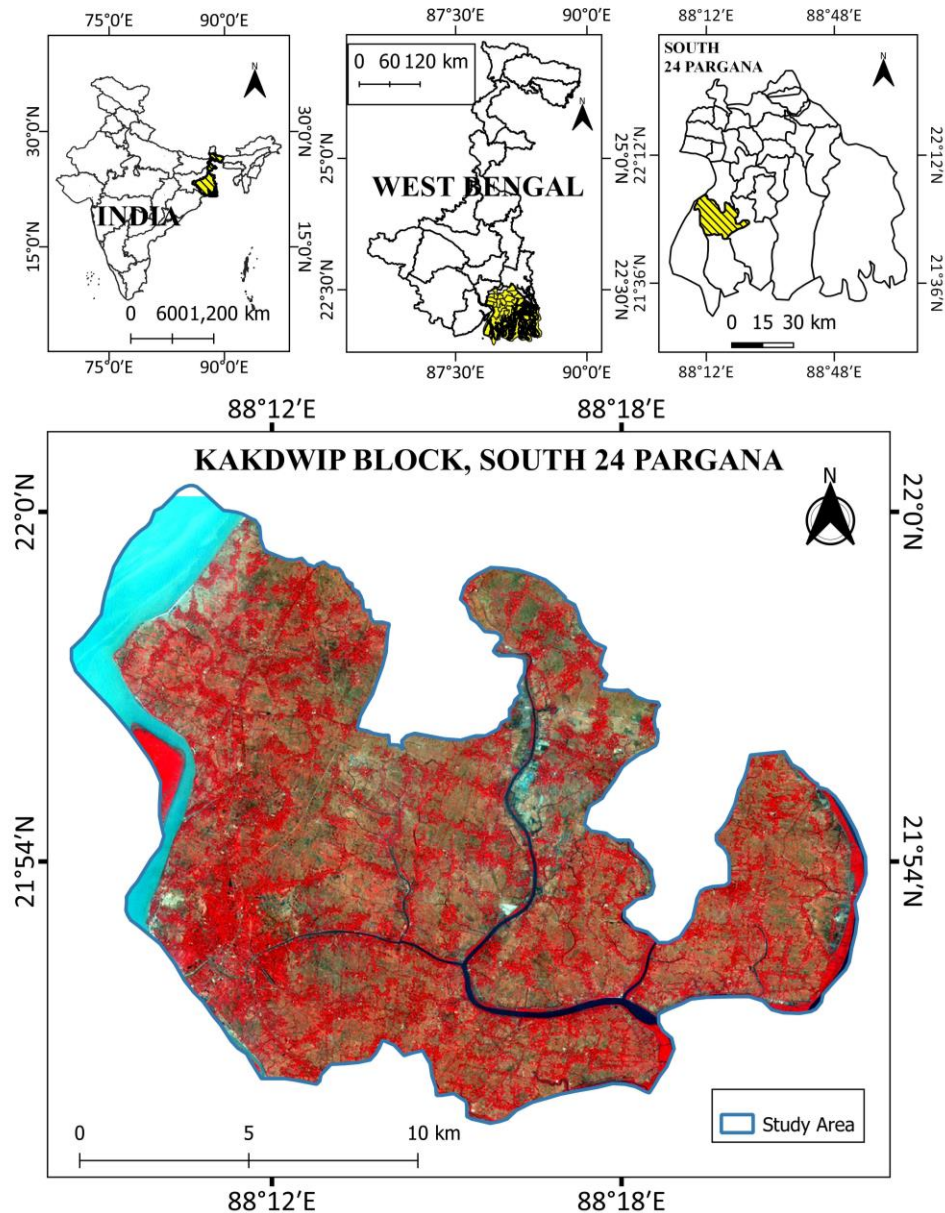


Fig: 1. Map of the study region showing the position of Kakdwip along with the deltaic regions of South 24Pargana of West Bengal and the River Hoogly towards its west.

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

This work is mainly based on descriptive qualitative method. It is conducted by categorizing data from the interview manuscripts done by door to door survey at 11 grampanchyats of Kakdwip block by means of personal questionnaire. The data were then tabulated followed by calculation and analysis through various types of statistical and quantitative techniques to find out the socio-

economic adaptability. It also helps to review the psychological perception and thought processes of the residents of that place regarding their view on employment status and general outcome of socio-economic livelihoods. To get the data information the respondents selected were people who are living there for more than 15 years and between the ages of 30-50 years who are capable enough to provide such information for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A primary survey has been done on the basis of one to one interaction through a questionnaire in 140 houses of Kakdwip block including 11 gram panchayat. This survey was conducted to find out the situation of occupational profile, income level pattern and land properties of the individual residing in this block. In the Kakdwip block area almost 32% household member are engaged as small farmer, 24% are engaged in business, 15% of household members are in services, 8% are engaged in cultivations, 1% of household members participate in cottage industries and 20% household member engaged in other occupational activities (Fig. 2).

In South 24 Parganas due to the periodical collapse of both the natural levees and man-made embankments speed up the process of filling up of the depressions containing brackish water wetlands. The marine delta in the south is formed of interlacing tidal channels. As non-saline water for irrigation is scarce, agriculture is monsoon dominated and mostly remains a mono-cropped activity, whereas some parts of the wetlands are still preserved for raising fish. Mostly major coastal dwelling areas face the same type of climatic changes (ICM, 2003).

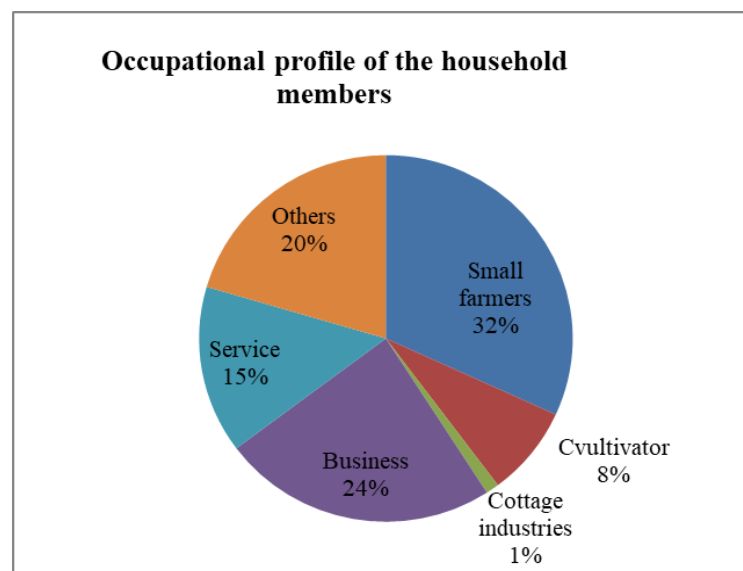


Fig. 2. Pie diagram showing the distribution of the occupational profile of the household members.

Among the gram panchayats taken for survey mostly the economy is totally dependent on agriculture and fishing. But as these two nature dominant activities requires favorable weather condition, so sometimes these major activities remain dormant when the area faces some natural turmoil. In thought of such happenings some people also engage themselves in various cottage industries like honey-collection, cultivation of fish baits to catch fish easily, preparation of winter essentials, etc. are the various activities among them. Generally the coastal regions always tend to reside more towards their natural habitat (Sampath, 2003). Apart from all these, a small percentage of youngsters prefer to relocate to states of Southern India in search of work including labours, helpers, contractual jobs and also some women workers who find work as household caretakers in working families. In case of Pratapadityanagar major commercial activities of Kakdwip subdivision is done at this gram panchayat area because there is high percentage of different cultural groups who have created a unique cultural as well as social harmony which is rarely seen in other gram panchayats of West Bengal. Recent studies have even revealed that slowly and steadily some tourists' spots are being developed near Samsernagar area, which is a government initiative. The communication and access to such places for its serenity and beauty are yet to develop and be reachable to people very soon. This would indeed make some earning with the growth of tourism industry as an alternative economic platform. Although there is provision for education in these areas still the level of education is very low as daily living is not favorable for them to pursue education. Only a very handful percentage of people are educated, even though various educational benefits are being circulated and announced so that through education a better livelihood can be achieved, still the progress is slow and only 15% of the population is able to engage them in some service to earn their living. The cottage industry is also availed by nearly 24% of people as small scale business including poultry farming, preparation of spices and pickles, Jam and Jelly, etc. are the things that are most commonly consumed in daily household food. All this has been coming up depending on the natural situation of this area for which only one major activity cannot bring in good livelihood due to occasional natural torments (Townesley, 2004).

While taking into account the study of the income level pattern in Kakdwip block, it is seen that the agricultural labour is 49.49% and their aggregate monthly income is Rs. 237000/-, pattadar and bargadar is 1.01% and their aggregate monthly income is around Rs. 2500/-, small farmer is 11.11% and their aggregate monthly

income is Rs. 42300/-, cultivator is 2.02% and their aggregate monthly income is Rs. 12000/-, cottage industry involves around 2.02% and their aggregate monthly income is Rs. 10000/-, those in business only 16.16% with aggregate monthly income of approximately Rs. 85600/-, the service holder is 8.08% with aggregate monthly income Rs. 172000/-, whereas other includes 10.1% with aggregate monthly income of Rs. 88000/- . So, per head highest income is in case of services i.e. Rs. 21500/- monthly and the lowest is for pattadar and bargadar i.e. Rs. 2500/- monthly (Fig. 3).

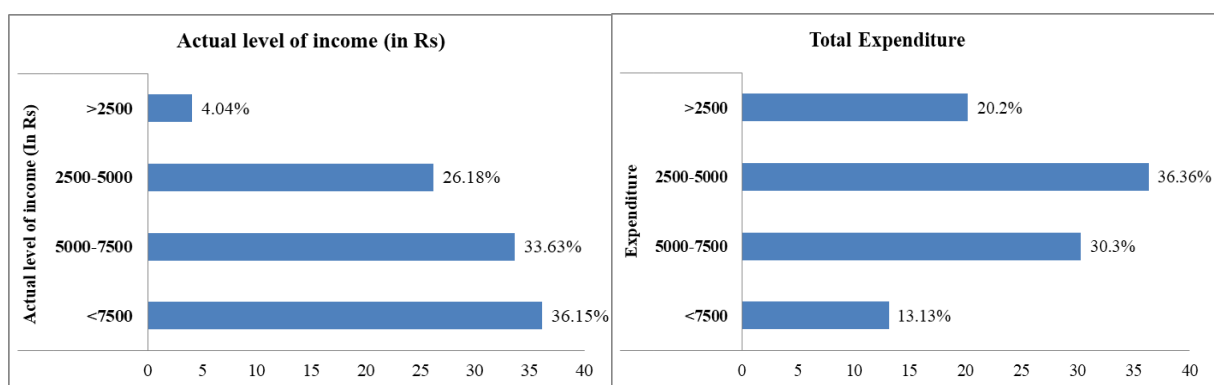


Fig. 3. Bar chart displaying the percentage of each class of the population and their cumulative level of income per month.

From the above income pattern as discussed, the actual income of the people of Kakdwip block which is above Rs. 7500/- is for 36.15% of people, between Rs. 5000-7500/- is for 33.63% of people, between Rs. 2500-5000/- is for 26.18% of people and less than Rs. 2500/- is for rest 4.04% people (Fig. 4). Total expenditure for the household purpose is above Rs. 7500/- for 13.13% of people, between Rs. 5000-7500/- for 30.3% of people, between Rs. 2500-5000/- for 36.36% of people and less than Rs. 2500/- for rest 20.2% people (Fig. 5).

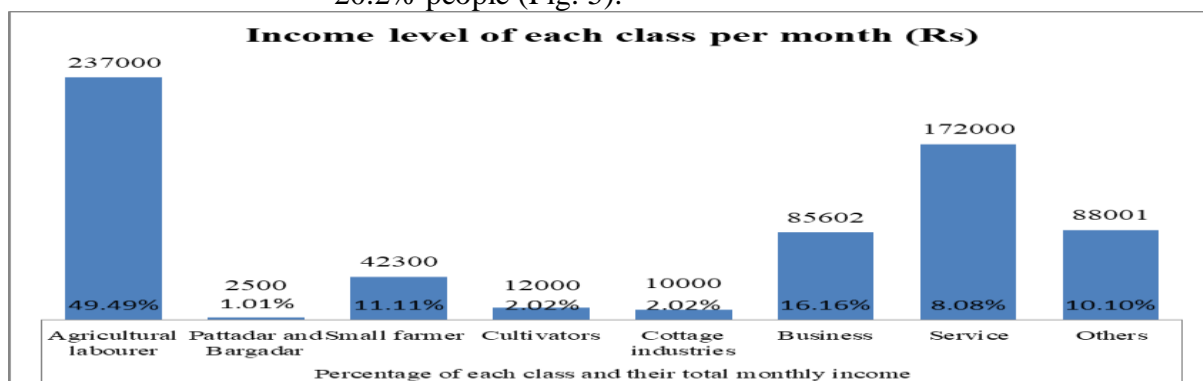
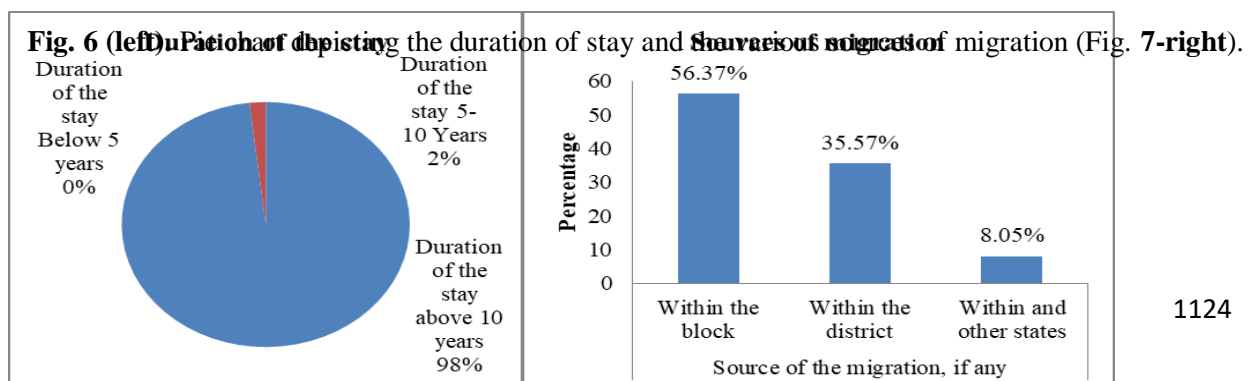


Fig. 4 (left) and 5 (right). Bar chart representing the actual and total expenditure of the studied population of Kakdwip region as revealed from the questioner survey respectively.

In context to the above discussion regarding the livelihood pattern, it is also necessary to understand the migration pattern of the people of Kakdwip block area since migration affects the socio-economic development of an area. The people leaving their original homelands in search of livelihood have dual impact on the social condition of the area. Firstly the male members leaving their family behind is headed by a senior women member, who takes up whole responsibility of protecting the other family members, secondly, the earning member ensures a better economic condition of the family left behind. On analysis of the data it has been found that around 15% of the residents move out singly or with family to other states or regions for a better livelihood. The duration of stay of the people is more than 10 years includes nearly 98.19% of migration whereas only 1.8% people migrate for the duration of 10 to 5 years and no data is available for migratory works of less than 5 years (Fig. 6). The migrant people within the block is about 56.37% who travel locally for daily wage work or other types of works that can be performed by commuting daily, around 35.57% of migrant workers come to the south 24pargana district headquarters or within district for work as there is on-road communication facility to access those places and rest 8.05 % of migrant workers locate to other regions of the state and also to other states of India for their living (Fig. 7).



CONCLUSION

Kakdwip block is the one of the most popular block in Sundarban deltaic region. This part of the west Bengal state every year faces cyclone, flood, soil erosion etc., which mostly causes an impact on socio-economic life of people dwelling in Kakdwip block. As per the collected data of door to door survey in Kakdwip block the three main socio-economic parameters has been taken into consideration i.e. occupation type, income level and nature of migration, which helped to bring out the present socio-economic status of Kakdwip block.

This study tried to discuss one of the deciding factors of an individual's choice of profession while living in the Sundarban area. One's profession level determines the kind of life that the person will lead. The livelihood patterns within the Sundarbans are widely dependent on climate and natural settings of that region. The inhabitants of the Kakdwip area generally report about the changes in environmental parameters, such as rainfall, temperature, sea level, wind direction, and the like. According to their understanding, the climate is gradually changing for which it is difficult to restrict their daily living to the age old specific activities only, viz. agriculture, fishing and collection of natural resources. It is very difficult to cope with such extreme natural torments, especially if people have very limited resources, their livelihoods gets severely affected, and they have no alternative employment to which they can turn. As the area is highly rich in natural resources, like fertile land, water resources, and unique forest resources, so the primary economic activities have been agriculture, fishing and utilizing various forest resources which serve their livelihood. But these sectors of daily livelihood get seriously affected by natural calamities, and the situation is worsening day by day. Climate change or natural hazards are believed to have had, or will have, severe impacts on the livelihoods of many households in the short, medium, and long term. Many people who live in this deltaic region have lost their livelihoods due to the loss of agricultural fields from river erosion or floods, which have destroyed the fertility of this land. Even the fishing activity has decreased due to contamination in water, degradation of the quality of fish and also the natural barriers that severely puts the life of fisherman in high risk. As a result, a significant number of people in these areas are now shifting away from the traditional occupations of their ancestors and being engaged in hassle free work from where the earning would be attained uninterruptedly. Currently, the residents of Kakdwip areas have undergone severe threats of livelihood due to the long-term effects of climatic hazards as a result of this; the normal standard

of living has become much lower than it was before. People from the current generation who were engaged in farming activities and belong to the high-income category are the ones who have changed occupation from their parental occupation (such as forestry and fishing), the persons who are able to seek education makes it a platform for earning by switching to services and leaving behind the traditional ancestral activities. The people are now aware of the upcoming turmoil with the natural disturbances and thus have decided to opt for various other sources of income that may consistently help them to survive such natural torments. In other words, slowly and steadily the intergenerational occupation change has started taking place in the South 24parganas district of West Bengal. In near future they would by themselves be able to combat such natural torments and can still keep themselves in good socio-economic condition to overcome the crisis situation. Various organizations and also different government initiatives are made available to these areas in order to render a stable economic condition to the residents.

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