



Economic Profile of Tribal Areas in South Punjab: Analyzing Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the economic profile of tribal regions in South Punjab, focusing on the tribal areas of Taunsa Shareef. The analysis is both quantitative and qualitative. The independent variables include income, professional standing, social networking, land ownership, sources of credit, credit purpose, and savings, whereas the dependent variable is the economic profile index. A questionnaire survey and interviews were used to obtain data from 206 respondents and were analyzed using various statistical techniques such as correlations, regression, and analysis of variance tables. The findings reveal that the tribal districts of South Punjab have an unsatisfactory economic situation. Tribal people also have difficulties obtaining higher education, farming, and using government programs. There is a strong connection between independent and dependent variables in regression analysis. The most significant influencing element is determined to be one's professional position. According to the findings, the government should first offer essential services like education, health care, and infrastructure to tribal people in tribal regions to improve their economic situation and ensure sustainable growth. This study has presented several practical implications to be considered by policymakers.

1. Introduction

Economic profile refers to a financial assessment of a person's job experience and family's financial situation in comparison to others, based on education, income, and employment. An economic profile combines descriptive numbers with selected economic (business and financial) data to provide an overview of a business sector, industry, area, city, or nation's economic background. Corporations utilize economic profile data to assess potential investment possibilities and the desirability of a place, city, or country for expanding their operations. The major drivers of the economic profile are demographic variables. Citizenship, socialization, and community characteristics all showed similar impacts. Gender, disability, education, and home structure are the most critical factors (Lakra S. et al., 2018). According to Nagaraju V. et al. (2019), Poverty status, educational attainment, per capita income, health, gender, age, family size, employment status, and assets are significant factors of economic profile in a study of determinants of socioeconomic status (SES). These factors can be used to determine the economic profile of a specific group.

Understanding the economic profile is critical since it aids in the resolution of resource management challenges as well as the formulation of better management decisions. Any subject of inquiry can benefit from a demographic and economic profile survey to better understand the geophysical and environmental conditions. Managers may prepare for the future rather than reacting in the present by considering the economic profile trend. Economic awareness may also assist resource managers in achieving economic and social objectives with limited resources. In terms of demographic and socio-economic criteria such as illiteracy, poverty, lack of developmental and health facilities, and a lack of social and economic justice, tribal people, cultures, and societies are the most pitiful sectors of the global population (Ghosh P.K., 2015). According to Mariyammal P. (2016), the tribes' economies are based on resources such as means of support that assist them in ensuring their future and community that protects them in terms of jobs and resources. Since the last several years, the development of tribal regions has become more important on a national and international level to increase their educational status, reduce poverty, and enhance the economic profile of the people living in these areas. However, tribal people development is a challenging task requiring greater vigilance than previously been devoted to tribal regions (Paray M.R., 2019). Tribal areas of Pakistan are continuously confronted with social and economic disparities, and they live in a dismal state where they lack even the most necessities of life. Since Pakistan's independence, the development of tribal regions on an equal footing with non-tribal areas has been critical. There is a significant gap between tribal and non-tribal people since tribal regions lack even fundamental living necessities (Chaudhry I.S., 2015).

Governments have attempted to create development projects in tribal regions and have spent cash, but the initiatives have failed to improve the economic situation as planned. The low rate of development is due to tribal members' lack of awareness of these plans or the agencies' failure to work diligently to execute those (Iqbal T. et al., 2020). This research focuses on the Taunsa Shareef tribal regions. Taunsa is the headquarters of the Taunsa Tehsil in the Dera Ghazi Khan District of Pakistan's South Punjab province. People in these places live and hope for the improvement of their community. The Koh-e-Suleman Mountains are located in this area. So yet, no study has been done on the economic profile of the individuals who live in these locations.

1.1 Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

There is a need for and sufficient scope for research on the economic profile of tribal areas in South Punjab because no adequate research has been conducted on the economic profile of the people in these areas. Thus no good economic profile has been documented for planning purposes by the government to uplift these areas. So, the following are the main objectives of this empirical study:

- To assess the economic profile of tribal regions in South Punjab and the future economic prospects these areas may have.
- To assess the economic problems encountered by tribal regions in South Punjab and make recommendations to the government on enhancing their economic profile.

1.2 The Significance of the Study

The tribal areas located in Baluchistan, KPK, and Sindh have been developing, but South Punjab's tribal areas receive far less attention due to the constraints posed by the political and demographic factors. The economic situation of tribal regions in FATA and tribal areas in other provinces, except for tribal areas in South Punjab, has been extensively researched. Such socio-economic study in the tribal areas of South Punjab can be pretty beneficial. This research study will add to the literature on and understanding of the economic profile of tribal regions in South Punjab and the problems and possibilities that come with it. This study has also presented several practical implications to be considered by the policymakers.

2. Review of Literature

Hoda and Bansal (2018) examined the effects of urbanization on social and economic conditions in tribal regions and the government's efforts to improve these areas. Tribal individuals in urban areas are less active in workforce activities than tribal people in rural areas. However, due to superior infrastructural development in metropolitan regions, the economic situation of urban tribal people is better than that of rural tribal people. The government should take specific steps to decrease inequalities between urban and rural indigenous people groupings. Deshpande S. (2018) attempts to put Hagen's hypothesis to the test in tribal regions. According to Hagen's idea, if an area has many development resources, it should take full advantage. The findings show that tribal people require character development, support, and education to maximize their possibilities. Tribal people must get a better understanding of local technologies. More engagement with non-tribal individuals and volunteer organizations can help tribal people become conscious. Mukhopadhyay, et al. (2020) attempts to assess the impact of the knowledge economy on the knowledge and health care of tribal people. The findings show that land distribution among tribal people decreases when innovation increases. Most businesses use CSR to offer essential health and financial services, but they have failed to benefit indigenous people. The application of justice might lead to the expansion of tribal territories.

Lakra et al. (2018) investigated the socio-economic circumstances of tribal farmers. Farming is evenly divided between men and women, and agriculture is the primary source of revenue. The canal is the primary irrigation method for agriculture, and the male leader of the household owns the property. Choudhary et al. (2018) try to explore the link between the socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics of tribal people and their degree of knowledge. The findings show that age and yearly income have a good but not significant association with knowledge level, but cultural characteristics and land ownership have a considerably beneficial influence. The source of information was discovered to be adversely connected to the amount of expertise. Another research looks at the socio-economic status of tribal people. NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and the governments are increasingly concentrating on tribal people's health and education. To increase tribal people's economic prospects, the government should set up a lending facility and advancement initiatives (Sunani K.C. and Mishra V.K., 2019).

Dakua A. et al. (2019) compared the socio-economic profiles of WADI (a land development project near tribal communities) adopters and non-adopters. Adopters of WADI enjoy a higher level of life. WADI adopters are 67% educated, whereas non-adopters are 47% educated. WADI adopters have paved dwellings in 26% of cases, whereas non-adopters had muddy houses in 13%. Finally, the government should encourage these projects to grow and better tribal regions' socio-economic conditions. Lakshmi G.M. and Muthuraj A. (2020) investigated the socio-economic status of ancient tribal areas with the findings that the ancient cultures were illiterate, ignorant, and naive. They are unaware of the chances provided by the government for tribal people. They must labor more than a regular worker to earn their supper. Governments, researchers, and private enterprises should concentrate their efforts on old tribal regions to improve their level of life and seize possibilities created by medical expansion and the improving economic position.

Another research examines the effect of socio-economic conditions on tribal people's seasonal movement. Most tribal people move to earn a livelihood and provide for their children's education. Seasonal migrations of tribal people are exacerbated by agricultural development, illegal land purchases, industrial land grabs, and natural calamities. Furthermore, a lack of education hampered the development of new living and survival choices (Anthony, 2020). Lindeblad and Mary (2019) investigate the variables that influence economic conditions in tribal regions to raise living standards. It was discovered that social devastation and weak government institutions are the root causes of tribal regions' low economic conditions and growing poverty. Economic conditions can be improved

through education and business possibilities. Raj M. and Singh C.P. (2019) investigate the influence of hydropower plant development on the living conditions of tribal people affected by the project and the socio-economic changes. The hydropower plant project has a beneficial effect on infrastructure development, road amenities, marketing facilities, improved health, and educational facilities. In contrast, the project harms cultural change, deforestation, social disintegration, homelessness, identity loss, landlessness, agriculture output loss, water resource exhaustion, and migration issues.

Khanday and Majeed (2019) attempted to investigate the influence of globalization on tribal peoples and the problems they confront in terms of language, culture, and lifestyle changes. In the guise of raising tribal people's living standards, institutions have created wealth for their gain at the expense of tribal people's livelihoods and safety. Tribal regions have also been subjected to financial maltreatment and environmental deprivation due to the hazardous extraction of natural resources. Another research by Shakirullah et al. (2020) uses qualitative data collecting and analytic approaches to understand and investigate the growing disputes among tribal people. Poor socioeconomic conditions, the deterioration of home institutions, political marginalization, and a lack of culture have all been identified as factors that contribute to violent conflict in tribal regions. It is deemed critical to offer livelihood amenities, political rights, institutions linked to health and education, and empowerment through development programs to reduce tribal conflicts.

Lyammouri (2019) looked at the barriers to growth and peace in the tribal people's region. Favoritism, maltreatment, and corruption are the root causes of violence and criminality in tribal communities and impediments to peace and development. The source of renewing growth and stability in this region has been a dynamic power structure. To eliminate economic inequities in tribal areas, the government should treat all ethnic groups equally. Another study by Narasimham S. and Subbarao D.V. (2018) investigated the influence of mining on tribal regions' socio-economic risk. The majority of mineral resources are discovered in tribal territories. The government implements mining policies in tribal areas to raise the standard of living in tribal areas by building mining industries. The findings show that mining negatively influences the economy because it produces land degradation, water, air pollution, tribe migration, social system devastation, homelessness, and health issues. It is necessary to reduce these issues by enlisting the help of the general public. This is made feasible by providing indigenous people with job possibilities. Rao V.N. (2019) investigated how development programs influence the socio-economic profile of tribal people and tribal people's receptivity to expansion initiatives. According to the findings, irregular forces of justice in the economic system and development plans have caused problems for the tribal people's disadvantaged society.

Minz S.K. (2020) attempted to investigate the hard truth of tribal people's dire economic situation and the causes for low development in tribal people's territory. According to the 2011 census, over 59% of tribal people are literate. To boost these sectors in technology, urgent measures must be adopted. This will aid in the development of their socio-economic capability. Iqbal T. et al. (2020) studied the challenges that tribal people in Jammu and Kashmir experience in participating in various development projects. The data was gathered using an interview schedule. Approximately 66% of indigenous people have little awareness of government services, 41% are cash-strapped, the majority are illiterate, and some live in remote locations. However, there is a shortage of effort from official institutions to educate indigenous people.

3. Data and Methodology

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative techniques are used to examine the economic characteristics of tribal regions in South Punjab. The tribal regions of Taunsa Sharif were chosen as the study's focus since there has been no research done on their economic characteristics. Retra, Tibbi Qaiserani, and Tibbi Buzdar are among the tribal regions. These tribal communities are located about 50 kilometers north of Taunsa Sharif on the Dera Ismael Khan Road, the Indus Highway. The reason for choosing these tribal regions was that they are not well-established, and no research of their

economic profile has been undertaken too far. The research is mixed and based on primary data gathered via questionnaires and interviews. A total of 206 persons from these four tribal regions were included in the study (Retra, Tibbi Qaiserani, and Tibbi Buzdar).

The research project's objective was made explicit to respondents, and data were collected with their permission. A large sample reveals the population's specific features. The questionnaire is based on several types of research.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: (1) Demographics (2) Economic Profile (3) Economic Opportunities (4) Economic Challenges. The information was gathered through interacting with tribe members at their homes or workplaces. People from several tribes were chosen at random to fill out the questionnaire. The respondents were from various walks of life, such as the jobless, farmers, general labor, special services group, and manufacturers. In addition, ten well-known persons from tribal regions were interviewed.

The data was analyzed using SPSS version-21. Different demographic factors as independent variables and income as a dependent variable are subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The Econometric Model employed in this study is presented as follows:

$$\text{Epi} = f(\text{Prs}, \text{Coi}, \text{Sln}, \text{Slh}, \text{Ldo}, \text{Soc}, \text{Poc}, \text{Pos}, \text{Psg})$$

Where **Epi** represents Economic Profile Index, **Prs** represents Professional status, **Coi** represents the calculation of income, **Sln** represents Social networking, **Slh** represents the size of landholding, **Ldo** represents land ownership, **Soc** represents a source of credit, **Poc** represents the purpose of credit, **Pos** represents a place of saving, and **Psg** represents the purpose of saving.

4. Data Findings and Analysis

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Economic Profile (E.P.) index, a dependent variable, was used to determine the correlation between all independent variables. At the significance level of 0.01, the results reveal that professional status has a significant correlation coefficient ($r = 0.648^{**}$) with the E.P. index (2-tailed).

At the 0.01 level of significance, income correlates ($r = 0.328^{**}$) with the dependent variable. At the 0.01 significance level, social networking exhibits a correlation ($.506^{**}$) with the dependent variable. Land size shows a significant association ($r = 0.418^{**}$) with the dependent variable, and land ownership is associated with the dependent variable at the value. $.231^{**}$, the source of credit exhibits a substantial connection ($r = 0.493^{**}$) with the E.P. index, as does the purpose of credit ($.255^{**}$).

At the 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance, only two factors, saving location and saving intent, show no significant connection with the E.P. index. Because the correlation value should not exceed 0.70, all of the variables in the model indicate substantial correlation.

All of the factors had lower correlations with the dependent variable than 0.70. All of the other dependent variables have a significant relationship with one another.

Table 4.1
Pearson Correlations

	Professional Status	Calculation of income	Social Net-working	Size of land	Land owner-ship	Source of Credit	Purpose of Credit	Place of savings	purpose of savings	EP Index
Professional Status	1									
Calculation of income	.054	1								
Social Networking	.129	.022	1							
Size of land	.174*	.085	.279**	1						
Land ownership	.101	.005	.153*	-.049	1					
Source of Credit	.325**	-.009	.305**	.055	.072	1				
Purpose of Credit	.117	.157*	.074	-.020	-.185**	.159*	1			
Place of savings	-.179*	.087	-.280**	-.174*	-.051	-.236**	-.011	1		
purpose of savings	-.265**	.025	.012	-.155*	.024	-.203**	-.113	.091	1	
EP Index	.648**	.328**	.506**	.418**	.231**	.493**	.255**	.025	-.012	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**.. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2 Regression Analysis The study's model was evaluated to see how different factors affected the economic profile, and the results were $F = 236.624$, $p = 0.0005$, and $R^2 = 0.916$. P values are less than 0.05, indicating that regression analysis meets the model's assumptions. The R-value of 0.957 suggests that the variables have a stronger connection. The percentage change in the model owing to independent variables is explained by the "R2" value of 0.916.

Table 4.2
Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.957	.916	.912	.12850	1.935

- a. Predictors: (Constant), the purpose of savings, Social Networking/ groups' participation, calculation of income, Land ownership, Purpose of Credit, savings, Professional Status, Size of land holdings, Source of Credit
- b. Dependent Variable: EP Index

4.3 ANOVA Table

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) reveals a significant difference between the variables' means. The value of $F = 236.624$, p is less than 005 in the following ANOVA table demonstrates that our regression model is a good match of data since independent variables are substantially predicted. The mean length of all the variables shows a significant difference.

Table 4.3
ANOVA Test

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	35.165	9	3.907	236.624	.000 ^b
Residual	3.236	196	.017		
Total	38.401	205			

a. Dependent Variable: EP Index

b. Predictors: (Constant), the purpose of savings, Social Networking, calculation of income, Land ownership, Purpose of Credit, place of savings, Professional Status, Size of land holdings, Source of Credit

4.4 Qualitative Analysis

Data derived through interviews with various persons are referred to as qualitative data. According to interviewees, political leaders work on development projects for their gain rather than for the well-being of the indigenous people. Politicians take advantage of all job possibilities and government initiatives, and these advantages do not reach the indigenous people. Politicians do not build schools or encourage education because they understand that if these people get educated, they will become our slaves or, at the very least, followers. The infrastructure is inadequate, and the roads are in poor shape. In tribal regions, people cannot readily migrate from one location to another. Tribal areas are rich in natural gas, gypsum, and other minerals. Many businesses are attempting to exploit these riches in the mountains of the Koh-e-Suleman range, but tribal areas are not benefiting. The primary reason for this is that people lack the necessary knowledge and awareness to take advantage of natural resource corporations. There is no authentic political leadership willing to sacrifice for the elevation of the struggling tribal people. The location from where corporations obtain natural gas should provide free natural gas to the residents of these places, but instead, individuals are charged for consuming natural gas.

The fundamental necessities of existence in these tribal regions, which still lack enough irrigation even for drinking reasons, and hence clean water and irrigation are among tribal people's top concerns. Multan has a plethora of textile businesses because cotton is cultivated there. There are so few hospitals, high schools, and colleges in the area that anyone wishing to pursue further education must travel to Multan or Bahawalpur. Some people cannot afford the costs of schooling or medical care in other places. For indigenous people, there are no work possibilities. If someone is educated, he has little chance of finding work. "Living standards may be improved by offering loans to the tribal people on simple payments because so much land is available for harvesting, but they do not have enough money to buy seeds and fertilizers for their land.

For the welfare of indigenous people, NGOs can play a critical role. In tribal regions, they supply clean water using water plants. They also provide tribe members loans to help them establish their businesses. Reduced corruption can improve the economic situation of tribal regions since the wealthy have access to all of the amenities while the impoverished do not. If you go to any

government agency and have any references, your job will be completed before those who do not have any references, regardless of who comes first. Tribal people are socially cooperative and assist one another in solving difficulties. Suppose the government wishes to survey tribal regions. In that case, the surveyors should also be tribal area residents, not outsiders, because strangers and outsiders are unable to perform an accurate survey as tribal area residents. Another obstacle to regional development has been a lack of well-functioning marketplaces. The tribal people's primary source of income is livestock, which they sell to supplement their income. They do not receive a fair price for their animals. Many of the answers to a question concerning education, notably higher education, claimed that lack of funding and educational institutions in tribal areas is one of the biggest obstacles tribal people experience in obtaining higher education.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The majority of tribal people are not well educated, according to all of the data linked to tribal demography. Tribal people live in large family gatherings, with very few tiny families, indicating that tribal people are very dependent and cooperative with one another in nearly all family-related socio-economic concerns. Most women in tribal regions are ignorant since most of the 206 women in the sample could not comprehend the questionnaire independently. Financial difficulties, increased household responsibilities, and a lack of knowledge and enthusiasm in studies contribute to education. This demonstrates that cattle farming is relatively favored and that the environment is suitable for cultivating animals such as poultry and cattle. This might also be related to cattle ranching is typically seen as a low-capital-intensive industry. Economic profile indicators show that the tribal people's professional standing is in flux. The majority of indigenous people do not have a stable career or source of income. Only a small percentage of indigenous people have a steady source of income, including government positions.

Compared to persons who live in non-tribal regions, most tribal people have lower income levels. Most tribal people obtain their income monthly through dairy products or other sources. At the same time, some receive their compensation weekly or daily, including their daily salaries. In tribal communities, males mainly hold property ownership, with only a few female landowners. It demonstrates that the tribal region is a male-dominated culture where women's economic well-being is limited to traditional hobbies like cultivation, cow breeding, house plantation, etc. The qualitative interview analysis revealed that tribal people desire to obtain an education but insufficient resources. Due to financial challenges and growth in household responsibilities, and parents' lack of awareness, most tribal people have difficulty acquiring an education. Animal farming is also a difficulty for tribal people. Most tribal people do not receive a fair price for dairy products, while others suffer expensive veterinary treatment costs. Unemployment among tribal people is primarily due to a lack of opportunity; however, a lack of education is also a significant factor.

Tribal people also have difficulty receiving benefits from government programs. Tribal people also do not profit from government initiatives due to the carelessness of political officials. Agriculture is difficult for tribal people. They confront severe agricultural issues such as a lack of irrigation infrastructure and expensive chemical costs. Tribal people also face difficulties using socio-economic opportunities, such as landspouts and robbery. Our survey findings are backed up and confirmed by qualitative interviews and previous research. The key economic issues may be described as follows: (1) the distance between the government and the people has grown due to a lack of corrective measures and political engagement in developing tribal regions. (2) The state has utterly failed to offer indigenous people economic possibilities.

Based on the literature review conducted in this study and the findings of this investigation, government authorities should publicize their welfare programs in tribal regions so that tribal people might benefit from these programs and schemes. Commercial promotion of tribal art and handicrafts would assist them in improving their economic situation. To monitor budgetary allocations and backwardness values for the development of tribal regions, the government requires Human

Development Index (HDI) mapping through rating. The security of revenue sources is needed to eradicate poverty. In such a scenario, agri-business training should be offered to provide new revenue sources, both in traditional regions and in creative sectors such as mushroom growing and vegetable cropping, which would help tribal people in the agricultural field.

5.1 Limitations of Study

This study used a small sample of respondents from a specific location in southern Punjab and a straightforward approach that included descriptive analysis and the OLS regression technique. Future studies could benefit from covering a larger country area and incorporating more rigorous data analysis techniques such as structured equation modeling (SEM) and multi-level modeling to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of tribal areas' socio-economic conditions.

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