Chapter III

METHODOLOGY
CHAPTER-III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The chapter describes the profile of the research area and research methodology for this study. The profile of the research area is discussed in terms of its selection, location, general information about study area, population and household. Research methodology is discussed in terms of the sample design, source of data, research tools, study variable, field experience and statistical tools used.

3.1: Profile of the Research Area

The research area is discussed in terms of its selection, location, and physical characteristics of the sample area, population and households. Research methodology is discussed in terms of the sampling frame, sample size, interview schedule -pretesting and its modification, description and measurement of variables, and method of data analysis.

The survey was conducted in Melapalayam- South (Tirunelveli District). The area selection was carried out in the following manner:

1. A list of areas from which workers have emigrated to the Middle East was obtained from the office of the Protectorate of Emigration in Tamil Nadu, India.

2. Area Melapalayam-South, which was on this list, was selected on these bases:
   (a) It has a long history of sending workers to the Middle East, with some migrants having been abroad for the last three decades. Considering the long history of migration from the area and a large number of migrant households, Melapalayam-South was considered a good choice for this study.
   (b) Another factor influencing this selection was Melapalayam’s location – it is only 10 km from the city.
3.1.1: General information about Study Area and Population

FIGURE-1
Location of the study area
The name Melapalayam-South is derived from its location west of Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli. In Tamil 'Mela' meaning 'West' derived from the word 'Merkku'. It is located in eastern bank of famous perennial Thamirabarani River. Its east side is covered by Oxford of South India-Palayamkottai. It gets green look in Western side as it is surrounded by fertile paddy fields. Melapalayam was earlier known as *Keela Veera Ragavapuram* in British Rule. Old age Tamil Name was "Mangai maa nagar.

In early years, Handloom trading was a main business. They exported handloom products to various countries such as Srilanka & Burma. Now this business totally vanished from the city. As an alternate, Beedi Industry took a place and playing major role in Melapalayam Economy. Most women are engaged in Beedi Rolling works. The predominant business of the people is "Beedi manufacturing". Many of the beedi manufacturers in South India laid their production units in and around Melapalayam. But now the scenario is getting changed and many men are working in Gulf countries. Here nowadays real estate business is playing an important role. Many construction works are also going. The total population of the area Melapalayam-South, according to a 2001 district census, is 26,063 with a total of 13,274 males and 12,789 females. These are privately owned shops, some of which are mud built while others are built with bricks.

3.2: Sample Design

As discussed earlier, according to the census report of 2001 the total population of Melapalayam-South is 26,063 and the total number of house-holds 5907. The number of migrants from Melapalayam-South who are working abroad is reported to be 793 (Census Report, 2001). Melapalayam-South does not have a map marking the streets and identifying houses on each street. Neither is there a list of migrant and non-migrant households. In order to ascertain the area geography, and to determine the possible
number of migrant households, reconnaissance visits were made by the researcher. In Melaplayam-South, there are eight streets, each having a different number of households. Due to our research purpose, it was hard to make an exhaustive and all-inclusive list of migrant and non-migrant households.

Therefore, from each locality a list of only the migrant households were prepared. This list was prepared by the researcher with the help of local panchayat head. The list did not include the returnee migrants or those who had been in the Middle East for less than a year. According to this list, the number of eligible migrant households (women whose husbands have been abroad for more than a year) was 167 in the eight streets. The pool of respondents in this study is therefore a universe of all women whose husbands have been in the Middle East for at least one year.

Considering the relatively manageable number of eligible migrant households, it was decided to interview women in all 167 households, while taking into account that some respondents might turn out to be ineligible or hard to interview for various reasons. The researcher was start interviews of migrant households from one street and then proceeds to the next. Moreover, in order to have approximately 50 a non-migrant household in the sample, the researcher has interviewed every 38th non-migrant household randomly. The women in non-migrant households were interviewed to provide a basis for determining the importance and prevalence of some of the findings from migrant households. Researcher has interviewed the available women in migrant households only. If the migrant household was vacant, or if the respondent refused to participate in the interview, researcher has gone to the next household. Because of these reasons, a total of 150 migrant households could be interviewed, while women in 50 non-migrant households were also interviewed. This yielded a total of 200 interviewed households.
The household for the purpose of this study is defined as an individual or a group of individuals who are related by kinship ties and who share common shelter, food, and other resources.

Two types of households were included in the sample:

(a) Households with wives whose husbands had been abroad more than a year, and
(b) Women in non-migrant households.

Households with returned migrants, and migrants, who were abroad less than a year, were excluded. In all cases, researcher has interviewed only wives not mothers-in-law, widows, or unmarried women. The field survey for data collection was conducted in November 2009-September 2010.

3.3: Source of Data and Research Tools used

The present study has been based on both the primary and secondary data. The secondary data were collected from the Journals, Books, Magazines, Newspapers, Websites, Published and Unpublished documents, Research Papers, Survey Report and Census Report, etc. The primary data were collected from the selected respondents of the sample region through a pre-tested and well structured interview schedule. Instruments for data collection were developed to gather information from the people. Given the nature of the study, it was decided to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. To collect the quantitative data, an interview schedule was prepared with use of the identified independent and dependent variables. Most of the questions were close ended. This schedule was first prepared and taken to the field for a pilot study. Based on the findings, some changes were made and the final interview schedule was ready to be administered to the people. The schedule consists of socio-economic details, decision making power of
women, women’s attitudes and household activities etc.. A systematic purposive sampling technique was used to select households for a detailed survey. Case studies of appropriate nature highlighting the effect of migration on women and children.

3.4: Study Variables

The broad purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between emigration and decision-making power, activity profiles and attitudes of the left-behind women. The study explores the relationships of various independent variables which have been identified in the research literature as having positive or negative associations with decision-making power, role change, and attitudinal change among the left-behind women in the households. The study takes into account family structure and division of labour within the family, and their relationship with various independent variables. It also considers attitudinal changes among women toward dowry, education, sex segregation, labour force participation, and gender equality and how these have affected the changing roles and decision-making power of the left-behind women.

The present study uses the following dependent variables:

(a) Women’s decision-making power in the household,
(b) Attitudes among left-behind women, and
(c) Activity profile (roles) of left-behind women.
The following independent variables are used in the analysis to predict changes in the roles and decision-making power of women in the left-behind families:

1. Family system (extended versus nuclear)
2. Migrant status (absence of husband)
3. Duration of stay (length of husband’s absence from the household).
4. Family income, including remittances.
5. Extent of husband’s contact with the household.
6. Wife’s level of education.
7. Husband’s level of education
8. Wife’s age
9. Number of children.
10. Socio-economic status of wife’s father
11. Husband’s ownership of property
12. Receipt of remittances by wife.

3.4.1: Dependent Variables

3.4.1.1: Measurement of women’s decision-making power

Several studies have used a variety of measures to determine family power. The present study used “final say” as a measure of power in the family. The questions asked who had the final say in various important household matters. The operationalization of decision-making power was done by asking questions about decision-areas such as spending money on food, clothing, social ceremonies, purchase of property and assets, children’s enrollment in school, their dropping out or staying in school, marriage & discipline, Health care, construction and improvement of the house, investment in business, purchase of household goods, purchase of ornaments, inviting people for meals, family planning,
Vacation, outside entertainment paying visits to family and friends relatives, taking out loans, job assignments to other members, and whom to visit. In the survey, the respondents were asked to report who made the final decision about each of the above items. The possible response categories were: husband, wife, both, joint with others, and others.

The measure the decision-making power of women with regard to 18 decision-power items (see Table 5.5), an index was constructed with values ranging from 0 to 18. The decision-making responses were coded on a 0/1 basis. The response category ‘wife’ and ‘both’ (husband and wife) were coded as 1 and other response categories were coded as 0. A value of 0 on the 18-item index indicates that wife was not involved in any of the particular decisions in the household, while a value of 18 indicates that wife made or was involved in all the decisions.

3.4.1.2: Measurement of women’s attitudes

To operationalize and measure the attitudes of women, a variety of questions were asked relating to issues such as, girls’ education, marriage age of girls, dowry, equality of men and women, dissolution of an unhappy marriage, taking permission to go out of the home, women’s right to speak on household affairs, decisions about the number of children, and job permission for women.

To measure women’s attitudes level, the responses based on questions related to the above issues were coded on a scale ranging from positive 1 to negative 1. The value of +1 was assigned to the modern attitudes while the value of -1 indicated more conservative attitudes. A 0 (zero) was used to code neutrality on the statement. A factor analysis was used to select variables which measured a specific type of attitude. Factor analysis
reveals that the following 10 items constituted the attitudes about gender equality regarding various dimensions: equality of men and women, eating together, walking together, job permission, women’s right to speak on household matters, spending on dowry, separate schooling for girls, preference for girls to stay home, and preference for husbands to consult with wives. From the above items a new dependent variable named ‘attitudes’ was computed. A reliability analysis was done and the value of alpha was calculated (standardized alpha = 0.641).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Unrotated Factor Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality of men and women</td>
<td>0.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and wife should eat together</td>
<td>0.569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and wife should walk together</td>
<td>0.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job permission for women</td>
<td>0.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s right to speak</td>
<td>0.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent should spend on dowry</td>
<td>0.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate schooling for girls</td>
<td>0.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for girls to stay home</td>
<td>0.419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands consult with wives</td>
<td>0.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % variation</td>
<td>14.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigen value</td>
<td>2.525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Eigen value 1 rule is used to determine the number of factors used in the scale construction of women’s attitudes. The response categories for the questions used in the scale were coded from -1 and +1.
3.4.1.3: Measurement of activity profile:

To operationalize the activity profile of women, a list of items was prepared according to different household and agriculture-related activities performed by women. The activities were divided into ‘indoor’ and ‘outdoor’ activities. The indoor activities included cooking, distributing food, washing, cleaning, and childcare. The outdoor activities included buying groceries, collecting fuel, visiting doctor with sick children, banking, and house repairs. Questions about who performed the above tasks were asked. The possible response categories were: “husband,” “wife,” “both,” “hired labour,” and “others.” For the Chi-square analyses, the response categories were divided into two groups; “wife” and “others.” The response was coded ‘1’ if wife performed the activity and ‘0’ if “others” performed the activity in/for the household.

In this study another variable, “wife head,” was also used as a dependent variable to test the hypothesis related to the impact of migration of husbands on the family system. The variable “wife head” was measured by asking the respondents who was the head of the household. The possible response categories were: “husband,” “wife,” “father-in-law,” “mother-in-law,” “brother-in-law,” and “others,” if any. For the migrant households, the response categories of “husband” and “wife” were combined and coded as 1, and “father-in-law,” “mother-in-law” “brother-in-law and “others” were coded as 0. The reason for combining “husband” and ‘wife” was that since husbands were absent from the households, they could not be the household heads, even though some respondents indicated that migrant households were heads of the household.
3.4.2: Independent Variables

3.4.2.1: Family system

To operationalize and measure the variable “family system,” questions were asked about household composition. The variable “family system” was measured as “extended” (coded 1) if someone (respondent’s in-laws or parents) other than the children of the respondents were living in the same household. If none other than the nuclear family members lived in the household, the variable was coded as 0.

The variable “migrant” measures the presence or absence of husbands from the households. It is coded 1 if the husband has gone abroad and ‘0’ if a husband is not a migrant (which means husband is present at home). To operationalize and measure the “length of stay abroad” of husband, questions were asked relative to the number of years the husband has been abroad. The level of education of husband and wife was measured as the number of years of formal schooling. Wife’s age was the actual age of the respondent. The number of children was the total number of children the respondent had. Family income and household income (including remittances) was the total annual income in Indian currency, rupees.

The variable “wife-recipient” was measured by asking the respondents specific questions about who received money sent by the migrant husbands. The response categories were: “husband,” “wife,” “father-in-law” “mother-in-law” “brother-in-law” and “others,” if any. “wife-recipient” was coded 1 if wife received the remittances and 0 if others received the remittances.
The variable “extent of contact with husband” was operationalized by the variables “husband’s return” and “letters/phone.” These variables were measured by asking questions about husbands’ return back home, and the frequency of letters and contact through telephone. The responses categories for the variable “telephone” were: irregular, monthly, weekly, biweekly, and others. Responses were coded as 1 for ‘irregular,’ 2 for ‘monthly,’ 3 for ‘weekly,’ and 4 for ‘more than weekly.’ The variable “husband’s return” was coded as 1 for every six months, 2 for every year, 3 for every two years, 4 for every three years, and 5 for irregular visits.

3.5: Field Experience

One of the critical steps in empirical research is data collection. In majority of cases, researcher is outsiders to the research area. Therefore need to establish communication and rapport with the local people before the actual collection of data. The present research was no exception. It was not an easy task to move around in the area without the support of the influential individuals in this place. Another critical factor in data collection was access to the women respondents. Without the approval of their men, it was very hard to gain access to them.

During the survey, it was discovered that younger women were more cooperative and some of them were quite out-spoken. However, the older women, mostly the mother-in-law, did not want us to talk to their daughters-in-law. During the survey in some of the sample households, it was not easy to interview only the respondents. As the interviewers stopped inside the sample households, within no time at all they were surrounded by the children and women. Once the respondent was identified and the interview started, it was hard to get responses only from the respondent. In the presence of her mother-in-law, the respondent would hesitate to answer fully some of the questions. The researcher was
forced to listen to the mother-in-law’s responses as well. Sometimes the neighbours
would come with a variety of their own questions and plenty of answers in response to
our questions to the respondents. However, it was observed that those women whose
husbands were abroad for a longer duration of time, or who were the only earners in the
family, generally appeared quite confident and outspoken.

3.6: Statistical Tools used

To process and analyze the data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was
used and the following steps were carried out:

(a) After entering the data in the computer, names and values of the variables were
assigned;
(b) The missing data were treated either by declaring them as 0 or assigning a value
of 99;
(c) Recoding of the variables was done;
(d) Frequencies and descriptive analyses were run to obtain the descriptive
information about the sample population;
(e) Some indices and new variables were computed by using factor analysis and inter-
item correlations to identify the items that measured the common dimensions of
the variables;
(f) Reliability analysis was done to determined the reliability of scales; and
(g) Chi-square statistic and multiple regression analyses were done to determine
relationship between various dependent and independent variables.

3.7: Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the research methodology, focusing on sample design, data
collection procedures, hypotheses, variables of the study and measurements. The next
chapter will contain the description and characteristics of the sample households and the
statistical results of the study.