CHAPTER III

Methodology
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3.0. The researcher has undertaken a micro-level study on the prevalence of poverty among people in Srivaikuntam Taluk, which is almost an agricultural area. The researcher has got sufficient knowledge of the area being an inhabitant. Further, she has chosen the topic for her M.Phil., degree too. A systematic sampling method has been applied to collect data. Only small farmers having lands less than 2 acres have been chosen. Apart from primary data, various studies and books on poverty have been studied before delving into the research problem. The study has been proceeded with sufficient knowledge of the subject.

A study on Poverty Among the Small Farmers in Srivaikuntam Taluk of Thoothukudi District is highly a 'pecuniary research study' and as such the present research study certainly requires a 'perfect research methodology' to make the entire study highly relevant, systematic and scientific. Research is a tool of sound economic policy. The first one is 'investigation' of economic phenomenon, continuous collection and compilation of the necessary data material and related information, needed to the selected research topic. The second phase of the research is the 'description' of the events that take place and the detailed analysis of the forces
underlying these events with the data and information available. The third phase of the research study is the ‘prediction’ of the future development of the study selected, in order to evolve new policies and suggestions for the improvement of the study made. Thus, from the point of view of ‘modern’ and ‘scientific’ research methodology, the above discussed important three aspects of research methods become highly essential to make the entire research study highly meaningful, successful and useful. As such the present, research study also requires the same scientific methodological treatment.

3.1. Research Methods

The present highly valuable and most important research study on ‘Poverty Among the Small Farmers in Srivaikuntam Taluk’ is evidently an ‘Explorative Study’ and not an ‘Innovative Study’. This is because of the fact that such innovative research studies are generally carried out in Biological and Physical Sciences. The present research study is mostly sought to be carried out by means of Primary Data. The investigator actually does not intend to collect more Secondary Data for analysis purposes because they will not bring out the ‘whole truth’ out and they will not also be much useful for not only identifying the real factors (problems) of poverty among the small farmers in the selected study area but also will not be helpful to evolve useful policies and suggestions to eradicate poverty and misery from the local small farmers of this region. Besides, most of the analyses are related to the socio-economic conditions, welfare situations of the
small farmers and the salient problems of these down trodden people in this locality. Of course, some necessary Secondary Data are also collected from various authentic and reliable governmental and semi-government and private sources. The required secondary data are also collected from various other prestigious sources like the Annual Reports of Thoothukudi District, District Statistical Office, District Information Centre, Statistical Hand Books, Records, Periodical Reports, Text Books, various related research articles, Economic Journals and number of reliable Economic Literatures. The data, materials and information about the selected research topic are then neatly edited, tabulated, processed and relevant statistical tools and formulae are used in this research study to bring out the facts that are underlying in the selected ‘research problem’.

3.2. Conceptual Under – pinnings

In Applied Economics, concept formulation or theoretical base is highly essential and is a task of paramount significant. What is absolutely essential is a conceptualisation about the present research topic to foster. As such, the present research topic on poverty among the small farmers of Srivaikuntam taluk should be strictly based on an authentic accepted and clear ‘economic concept’. Thus, the present research topic is based on the concept of ‘Welfare Economics’, ‘Theory of Poverty’ and closely based on ‘Economic Theory of Growth and Development’.¹
3.3. Need of the Study

The present research study becomes highly needful and essential in the sense that it involves in the study of very great economic and social problems that are haunting like a devil those people living in Srivaikuntam Taluk of Thoothukudi District, for fairly a long period of time. They are kept under the cruel clutches of poverty and misery for years together and have a very low and substandard living. Therefore, ways and means should be found out to liberate these poor people from this utter poverty, as early as possible. Hence, it is evident that there is a genuine research problem in the present research study which needs a fresh and detailed research study.

3.4. Statement of the Problem

Rural poverty in our country prevails among the households of cultivators, landless agricultural labourers and artisans. The households of small farmers form an important segment of rural poverty. Among the cultivators, small farmers are greatly affected as they have been pushed to become agricultural labourers during drought periods. This study being an in-depth enquiry of living conditions of small farmers, it is to reveal the poverty among the down trodden section of our society who are facing peculiar problems.

The researcher has chosen a convenient place for the study. With the intention of studying the level of poverty and its
magnitude, the reasons for the malady, an indepth study has been undertaken. The income levels, consumption pattern and other relevant economic data have been obtained by as structured questionnaire. Eventhough there are many macro level studies of poverty are available, the researcher wishes to examine the poverty of small farmers empirically. The present work being micro, is exploratory in character.

It is a well known fact from the official records of Statistical Office, Thoothukudi District that for years together Srivaikuntam Taluk is seen to be one of the ‘most backward’ regions in the whole of Tamil Nadu State. The poor educational status, low social status, severe unemployment, low income and similar other social and economic indicators of the study area are clear evidences of severe poverty and misery in this region. As such, the present research study becomes highly vital and scopeful to be carried out on a full scale.

3.5. Selection of the Study Area

The title selected for the present research study is ‘Poverty Among the Small Farmers in Srivaikuntam Taluk of Thoothukudi District’. Therefore the area of study selected is actually the Srivaikuntam Taluk of Thoothukudi District. It consists of 133 villages. It has a total population of 117594. The main reason for the
selection of this area for the present research study is that there is 'acute poverty in this region, for years together.

3.6. Collection of Data

The research study on the selected study certainly requires lot of data and information to complete the entire research work reliable, scientific, work and successful. Generally, they are classified into two types. The first one is Primary Data and the second one is Secondary Data.³

3.6.1. PRIMARY DATA

Primary Data are the Statistical Information collected in a systematic manner in any selected research study, through the methods of clear observation and making deep enquires with the respondents to make the study precise and accurate. As it is already pointed out in clear term, the present research study basically depends on Primary Data, rather than on Secondary Data because of the real truth that the topic selected is such that it requires more and more of Primary Data. Primary Data could really bring to the lime-light the various socio-economic factors such as the total size of family members, total number of dependents and earners, the various causes for unemployment and under – employment, prevalence of too much of marginal farmers and poor farming conditions, low income and similar other facts about the small farmers at Srivaikuntam Taluk of Thoothukudi District and also to collect data as 'first hand' and
'original information' regarding the various salient problems such as hot climate, poor monsoon, water scarcity, money problem, marketing problems, social and welfare problems and other various facts which are held responsible for keeping poverty and misery in this study area. A pilot study was first of all conducted on a Random manner to prepare the 'Interview Schedule' on a perfect manner. A total of 200 samples are taken in this research study on a random basis. Afterwards a neatly prepared 'Questionnaire' is prepared under various relevant captions to collect all the required data, materials and information, which are highly essential to carry out the different kinds of detailed 'analyses' to be evolved in the ensuing chapters. The sample size to cover the study are is as follows. To make it representative stratified random sampling method is adopted. The respondents were selected to give proportional representation to the population of small farmers in the study area as given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sawyerpuram</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukkani</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subramaniapuram</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangalakurichi</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivakalai</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.2. SECONDARY DATA

Secondary Data are also Statistical Data and relevant Economic Literature which are collected in the present research study to make an in-depth analysis about the other aspects of the selected research problem. The present researcher has collected lot of reliable and relevant Secondary Data from various 'published' and 'Unpublished' Data and informations from the different Government offices which are situated at Srivaikuntum Taluk of Thoothukudi District. Moreover, the needed research materials are also collected from Research Institutes, Text-Book, Journals, Magazines, Study Reports, Bulletins, Articles, District Profile, Office of Social Welfare Development and other highly reputed Newspapers and Theses. These Secondary Data thus collected also enhance the validity, accuracy, scientific approach and reliability of the present research study, fully.

3.7. Statistical Tools and techniques Used

A number of Quantitative Techniques (SPSS) are used in the present research study to make the entire research study scientific, precise, reliable and useful in all respects. As such, the following Statistical Techniques are used, whenever necessity arises:

- Income – Expenditure Relationship Analysis.
- Income Standard Analysis – P.C.I.
- Expenditure Standard
- Simple and Multiple Bars.
- Stratified random Sampling Method
3.8. Period of Study

The present research study is mostly a ‘Cross-Section Analysis Method’, rather than a Trend Line Analysis. Hence, the year 2004-2005 is selected to include all the essential factors related to the study of poverty and misery that prevail in the study area. The main purpose of adopting the Cross-Section Analysis Method is that this method would pave way for not only making a complete radical research study but also for having a perfect study on a full-fledged scale.

3.9. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to review poverty among the small farmers and analyse the reasons and suggest remedial measures by means of a field survey of Srivaikuntam Taluk in Thoothukudi District.

The researcher focuses her attention on the following objectives.

1. To estimate per household and per capita income of small farmers.
2. To assess the degree of inequality in the distribution of income and consumption of small farmers.
3. To analyse the consumption and expenditure pattern of the respondents.
4. To estimate their savings habit and indebtedness.
5. To study the peculiar problems faced by the small farmers by an in-depth study.
6. To study category wise poverty among the small farmers.
7. To offer suggestions for the alleviation of poverty among the small farmers on the study.

3.10. Hypotheses

'Hypothesis' is usually considered as the 'Principal Instrument' in any social or economic research study. The main purpose of having Hypotheses is to give a scientific and reliable touch to the whole research work and they may be proved or disproved after the analyses are done. Following are the essential hypotheses that are framed in the present research study.

The researcher has framed the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant variation in the mean incomes among the backward community, most backward community and scheduled caste respondents of the small farmers.
2. There is no significant variation in the mean incomes among the respondents occupation wise.
3. There is no association between poverty and the caste groups living in this area.

4. There is no significant difference between the mean income of all the respondents and the mean incomes of the three caste categories.

5. There is no significant difference between the mean income of all the respondents and the mean incomes of the three categories. i.e., owner cultivators, tenants and agricultural labourers.

The above hypotheses have been tested with simple statistical tools and the results have been obtained. These hypotheses have given direction to the research study to arrive at conclusions. The hypotheses open up scope for statistical analysis to a larger extent.
REFERENCES


5. A Model Questionnaire is attached at the end of the thesis as Appendix.