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Manuscript ID:  
ECO-2023-12016831

Volume: 12

Issue: 1

Month: December

Year: 2023

P-ISSN: 2319-961X

E-ISSN: 2582-0192

Received: 05.10.2023

Accepted: 25.11.2023

Published: 01.12.2023

Citation:

Sakthivel, S., and A. Kannan. "Gender Inequality and Discrimination: A Special Case of Local Community, with Reference to Local Commons in Madurai District of Tamilnadu." *Shanlax International Journal of Economics*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2023, pp. 93–99.

DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.34293/economics.v12i1.6831>



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# Gender Inequality and Discrimination: A Special Case of Local Community, with Reference to Local Commons in Madurai District of Tamilnadu

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## Abstract

*The present study focuses on gender inequality and discrimination within a local rural community, with special reference to common property resources. The rural population faces numerous challenges in collecting raw materials from these Common Property Resources (CPRs). Local inhabitants heavily rely on these common property land resources due to the cost-free and convenient access they provide for their daily sustenance and livelihood maintenance. However, in the area of concern, the majority or dominant community often controls or encroaches upon these common property resources. Gender inequality significantly impacts the livelihood and survival of the rural poor. This research was conducted in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, and involved over three hundred sample respondents. The study employed the simple percentage method and chi-square test for analytical purposes. The findings revealed that common property resources are highly available and accessible but are in poor condition in the study area. Additionally, caste and economic discrimination are prevalent issues within the local community.*

**Keywords:** Common Property Resources, Gender, Inequality, Livelihood, Rural Poor, Discrimination.

## Introduction

Common property resources are unstructured or natural resources and maintaining the institution or local governance. Economists generally categorize types of goods by their rivalry and their excludability. Important contemporary examples of common property resources include the global atmosphere, the oceans, large lakes, rivers, forests, and fish and wildlife populations, including birds. Though not inevitable, the overexploitation of common property resources has been always a potential threat, and often a frightening reality (Clark, 2013). Many current environmental problems can be traced to the working of a so-called tragedy of the commons (Berry, 2018). Common Property Resources (CPRs) refer to natural resources, such as land, water bodies, forests, and pastures, that are collectively owned and managed by a community or a group of people. These resources are distinct from private property, which is owned by individuals, and public property, which is managed by the government.

CPRs play a vital role in many rural and traditional communities, especially in regions where livelihoods are closely tied to agriculture, livestock rearing, and other subsistence activities. They are often used for activities like grazing animals, gathering firewood, collecting water, and harvesting non-timber forest products.

## **Key features of Common Property Resources include**

### **Collective Ownership**

CPRs are collectively owned and managed by the community or a specific group within it. While individual members have rights to access and use these resources, they do not own them privately.

### **Shared Benefits**

The benefits derived from CPRs are distributed among community members based on established norms and rules. These benefits can include food, fuel, and income generated from resource use.

### **Sustainable Management**

Communities often have an interest in managing CPRs sustainably, as they depend on these resources for their long-term well-being. Sustainable management practices are developed to prevent over-exploitation.

### **Local Governance**

Decision-making regarding the use and management of CPRs typically involves community-level institutions and traditional knowledge systems. These institutions may set rules, resolve disputes, and allocate access rights. However, common property resources can face challenges, including overuse, degradation, and conflicts. Issues like gender inequality and discrimination can also affect access and control over these resources. Scholars and policymakers often study CPRs to better understand their dynamics and develop strategies for sustainable resource management. Efforts to address the challenges associated with CPRs often involve a combination of community participation, government regulations, and conservation practices to ensure that these vital resources continue to support the livelihoods of rural and traditional communities.

### **Aim of the Study**

The common property resources give more opportunity for get income and employment in rural people. The common property resources are continuously declined in past few decades. For instance according to Jodha (1986) has documented that 82 villages spread over 21 districts of the dry

regions of India, the factors which led to the decline of CPRs in terms of area physical degradation and management system, and related them to the disintegration of social and institutional arrangements evolved and enforced by the rural community to protect and manage CPRs. For the same the present study aims at the current status of common property resources and opportunities for people's in Common property resources governance and Contribution of CPRs in rural poor livelihood in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu. The present study was used for many variable in various aspects of contribution of common property resources in rural area.

### **Methods and material collection**

Common Property Resources (CPRs) hold paramount importance for rural communities, particularly in facilitating their livestock maintenance. This study was conducted in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, and exclusively relied on primary data sources. A Multistage sampling method was employed for selecting the study areas, while convenience sampling was used to choose the sample respondents, resulting in a total of 305 participants. The collection of primary data from the sample respondents was carried out through pre-tested interview schedules. Data analysis was performed using the simple percentage method and correction method. The research findings highlight the numerous challenges faced by rural communities in the study villages, particularly in accessing essential resources like fodder, fuel wood, grazing areas, fiber, dung, green manure, and potable water from nearby lakes, among other difficulties.

### **Review of Literature and Empirical Foundations**

Common resources are natural and social resource systems for which it is difficult to regulate levels of individual consumption. In order to avoid "the tragedy of the commons," privatization or public ownership of common resources has often been considered the most efficient way to manage these resources (Berry, 2018). Quantity of fodder is an indicator of improved natural resource base and the share of CPRs indicates improved common pool resources (Reddy et al., 2015). Social controls found in many traditional fishing communities,

amply documented by anthropologists, many administrative controls in the contemporary fisheries management also create limited property rights over fishery resources (Berkes, 1985). Common property resources are (renewable) natural resources where current excessive extraction reduces future resource availability, and the use of which is de facto restricted to a specific set of agents, such as inhabitants of a village or members of a community; think about community-owned forests, coastal fisheries, or water reserves used for irrigation purposes (van Soest, 2013). The empowerment of local communities in the management of forest resources is necessary, it can only be effective when an

institutional dialogue framework for dialogue and collaboration is in place. This will provide additional sub-sector frameworks, within the forestry sector, with specific discourses on issues related to the management of natural resources. Such frameworks ensure that community interests are primary especially as related to community rights (i.e., tenure, access, alienation) and benefit accruals (Mwitwa et al., 2015)

### Result and Discussion of the primary data

In this region the researcher has an attempt to analyse the current status of CPRs, CPRs contribution and opportunities for People’s in CPRs Governance in the study area.

**Table 1 Opinion on the CPRs Contribution to Rural Community in the Study Area**

Sl. no	Variables	Opinion on CPRs Contribution to Rural Communities					Total
		Very good	Good	Average	Bad	Very bad	
1	Availability CPRs	xx	29 (9.5)	62 (20.3)	156 (51.1)	58 (19.0)	305 (100)
2	Accessibility of CPRs	xx	56 (18.36)	107 (35.08)	114 (37.37)	28 (9.18)	305 (100)
3	Protecting traditional	xx	47 (15.40)	193 (63.27)	44 (14.42)	21 (6.88)	305 (100)
4	People’s Participation in CPRs area	xx	30 (9.83)	165 (54.09)	75 (24.59)	35 (11.47)	305 (100)
5	NGO’s in CPRs Management	xx	50 (16.39)	104 (34.09)	110 (36.06)	41 (13.44)	305 (100)
6	Panchayat in CPRs management	xx	46 (15.08)	160 (52.45)	76 (24.91)	23 (7.54)	305 (100)
7	Informal System (Kudimarathu)	xx	30 (9.83)	161 (52.78)	72 (23.60)	42 (13.77)	305 (100)

**Source:** Primary Information Note: XX – not very good

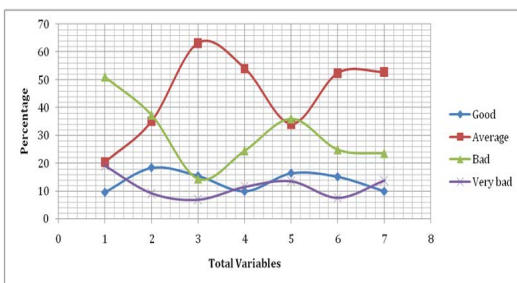
Table 1 provides an overview of respondents’ perceptions regarding the availability, accessibility, traditional protection, people’s participation, NGO involvement, and local panchayat management of Common Property Resources (CPRs) in the study area. A substantial majority, accounting for 51.1 percent, expressed concerns about the poor availability of CPRs in the study area, while 20.3 percent considered it average, 19.0 percent very poor, and 9.5 percent reported good availability. In terms of accessibility, 37.37 percent of respondents described it as bad, 35.37 percent as average, 18.36 percent as good, and 9.18 percent as very poor.

When it comes to traditional protection of CPRs, 63.27 percent rated it as average, 15.40 percent as good, 14.42 percent as bad, and 6.88 percent as very bad. Regarding people’s participation in CPRs management, 54.09 percent considered it at an average level, 24.59 percent as bad, 11.47 percent as very bad, and 9.83 percent as good. The role of NGOs in CPRs management was perceived as bad by 36.06 percent of respondents, average by 34.09 percent, good by 16.39 percent, and very bad by 13.44 percent. The local panchayat management of CPRs was rated as average by 52.45 percent, bad by 24.91 percent, good by 15.08 percent, and very bad by 7.54

percent. In terms of the informal system of CPRs, 52.78 percent found it to be average, 23.60 percent bad, 13.77 percent very bad, and 9.83 percent good in the study area. This data provides insights into the various aspects of CPRs governance and management, highlighting areas where improvement may be needed.

**Evidences of earlier studies**

According to Singh (1994) study found that in india nearly 40 percent of the rural poor are suffering from poverty and largely depend on CPRs. Nearly 30 percent of the total land, 40 percent of the total forest and bulk of the water resources and fisheries are CPRs and traditionally have been used by the rural poor. Further, Bromley and Cernea (1989) study reveals that a resource regime is an explicit or implicit structure or institutional arrangement or working rules of rights and duties characterizing the relationship of co-users to one another with respect to a specific natural resources. For my study also reveals that the structure of institutional arrangements are satisfied in the study area. Jodha (1991) documents the decline of CPRs over the past 40 years and the negative impact on the livelihoods of poor communities. Gaur (2018) discusses the appropriation of CPRs by the state for infrastructure development and the need for clear ownership rights and favorable land tenure arrangements.



**Figure 1 People's Opinion on current status of CPRs in the study area.**

Source: computed from primary source

**Testing Hypothesis 1**

**Null Hypothesis (Ho):** There is no significant association between gender and people's participation in CPRs governance.

**Alternative Hypothesis (Ha):** There is a significant association between gender and people's involvement in CPRs governance.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Spearson Chi-Square	6.532a	3	.088
Likelihood Ratio	6.487	3	.090
Linear-by-Linear Association	.135	1	.713
N of Valid Cases	305		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.95.

Source: computer from primary data

The Chi-Square tests conducted in this analysis suggest a limited and non-statistically significant association between the two categorical variables under investigation. The Spearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio, and Linear-by-Linear Association tests yielded p-values of 0.088, 0.090, and 0.713, respectively, with degrees of freedom ranging from 1 to 3. These results indicate that there is a relatively weak relationship between the variables, and any observed associations may be due to random chance rather than a meaningful connection. Therefore, it can be concluded that, based on the data and these statistical tests, there is insufficient evidence to support a significant association between the two categorical variables being examined in this analysis.

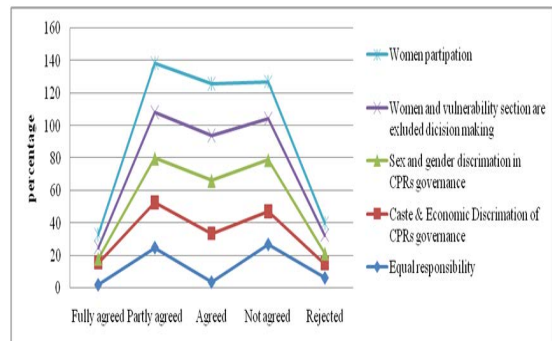
**Table 2 Opportunities for People’s in CPRs Governance**

variables	Opinion on CPRs contribution to rural communities					Total
	Fully agreed	Partly agreed	Agreed	Not agreed	Rejected	
Equal responsibility	7 (2.29)	76 (24.91)	120 (39.34)	82 (26.88)	20 (6.55)	305 (100)
Caste & Economic Discrimination of CPRs governance	41 (13.44)	85 (27.86)	91 (29.83)	62 (20.32)	26 (8.52)	305 (100)
Sex and gender discrimination in CPRs governance	7 (2.29)	83 (27.21)	99 (32.45)	97 (31.80)	19 (6.22)	305 (100)
Women and vulnerability section are excluded decision making	21 (6.88)	87 (28.52)	85 (27.86)	78 (25.57)	34 (11.14)	305 (100)
Women participation	24 (7.86)	92 (30.16)	97 (31.80)	69 (22.62)	23 (7.54)	305 (100)

Source: Primary information

Table (2) presents insights into the extent of people’s involvement in CPRs Governance in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu. A substantial majority, comprising 39.34 percent of the respondents, expressed their agreement with sharing equal responsibilities in CPRs Governance, while 26.88 percent disagreed, 24.91 percent were partially in agreement, 2.29 percent fully agreed, and 6.55 percent did not respond, indicating rejection. Caste and economic discrimination play a pivotal role in CPRs Governance, with 29.83 percent of respondents in agreement, 27.86 percent partially agreeing, 13.44 percent fully agreeing, 20.32 percent disagreeing, and 8.2 percent rejecting this notion. Women’s significant contributions to CPRs, such as collecting various materials like fodder, fuelwood, small timber, and leaves, are accompanied by challenges, including gender discrimination. Among respondents, 32.45 percent agreed with the presence of gender discrimination in CPRs Governance, 27.21 percent were partially in agreement, 31.80 percent disagreed, 2.29 percent fully agreed, and 6.22 percent rejected this view. Furthermore, in terms of women’s opportunities and vulnerabilities, 28.52 percent partially agreed, 27.86 percent agreed, 25.57 percent disagreed, 6.88 percent fully agreed, and 11.14 percent rejected the concept. Regarding women’s participation, 31.80 percent agreed, 30.16 percent were partially in agreement, 22.62 percent disagreed, 7.86 percent fully agreed, and 7.54 percent rejected the idea within the selected study villages. The table underscores the substantial contributions

of women to CPRs lands and emphasizes the pivotal role of common property resources in enhancing the quality of life in rural poor communities.



**Figure 2 Opinion on Opportunities for People’s in the CPRs Governance**

Source: computed from Primary data

**Testing Hypothesis**

Following area of the analyse the two qualitative variables has been chosen in the testing the hypothesis such as Gender and CPRs governance in the study villages.

**Hypothesis 2**

**Null Hypothesis (Ho):** There is no significant association between gender and caste, as well as economic discrimination, in CPRs governance.

**Alternative Hypothesis (Ha):** There is a significant association between gender and caste, as well as economic discrimination, in CPRs governance.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
spearson Chi-Square	14.172a	4	.007
Likelihood Ratio	15.433	4	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.794	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	305		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.08.			

**Source:** Computer from Primary Data

The Chi-Square test results presented here point to a substantial and statistically significant relationship between the variables being investigated. The Spearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio, and Linear-by-Linear Association tests, with associated p-values of 0.007, 0.004, and 0.003, respectively, all indicate a pronounced and meaningful association between these variables. This data strongly suggests that gender and caste or economic discrimination have a significant impact on Common Property Resources (CPRs) governance, with the relationships observed going beyond mere chance. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing and understanding the role of gender and discrimination in the context of CPRs governance.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, a substantial portion of the rural population in India relies directly on natural resources such as forests, soil, water, fisheries, and wildlife for their livelihoods and well-being. Local communities have the potential to develop and manage institutional arrangements with minimal transaction costs. This study underscores the significant role of Common Property Resources (CPRs) in rural livelihoods, including the collection of raw materials, fodder, fuelwood, timber, fish, dung, grazing, leaf collection, and other uses like threshing grounds and local roads. The enhanced productivity of natural resources within the framework of common property regimes holds considerable relevance due to the critical dependence on these resources for the well-being of rural communities.

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