

Research

Traditional Wine Brewing and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Andro Village, Manipur

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Abstract: The Scheduled Caste (SC) women are one of the most socio-economically backward communities in Manipur. The Scheduled castes community is mainly inhabited in remote foothill areas of the central Imphal valley. The socio-economic activity determines the present status of a community and their living condition. Geographically, Andro village is one of the ancient and rich cultural heritages of the scheduled caste community. They belong to the Meitei community; their traditions, culture, and customs are highly distinctive and have been preserved for generations. The main economic livelihood activity of women of Andro is traditional wine brewing. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the empowerment of women rice wine brewers in Andro by examining the various factors influencing their empowerment. The research is based entirely on primary data collected through a field survey conducted as part of my doctoral research. A total of 308 respondents were selected using a random sampling technique. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical methods, including percentages, and inferential statistics, particularly the Chi-square test, were employed to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between age and several dimensions of empowerment, namely decision-making, economic activities, autonomy, political participation, and social attitudes.

Keywords: Economic, Empowerment, Political Participation, Rice Wine, Women.

1. Introduction

Household industries are small-scale enterprises operated within the premises of a home by an individual or members of a family, typically requiring minimal capital investment. Such industries are found worldwide and play a significant economic and social role in supporting the livelihoods of various sections of society. In Manipur, the

majority of the population depends on agriculture as their primary occupation. However, the absence of large-scale industries capable of generating sufficient employment opportunities for the growing population has increased the importance of household-based economic activities. Furthermore, the limited availability of agricultural land restricts the expansion of agricultural production, making household micro and small-scale industries an essential source of income and employment.

Among these industries, handloom weaving remains one of the most prominent household income-generating activities in Manipur, with weaving looms found in a majority of rural households. Traditionally, weaving is performed exclusively by women. In addition to handloom weaving, several other household industries, such as carpentry, cane and bamboo crafts, embroidery, basket making, tailoring and stitching, poultry farming, and rice wine brewing, provide part-time and full-time employment opportunities to a large number of people. Women play a central role in most of these household-based enterprises, contributing significantly to household income and local economic development.

Among the various household industries practiced in Manipur, rice wine brewing occupies a unique place due to its cultural and traditional significance. The practice has been passed down through generations in certain communities, with each locality developing its own distinctive methods and techniques of production. Rice wine brewing is particularly prevalent among the Loi communities of Andro, Sekmai, Phayeng, Khurkhul, Koutruk, and Chairen, as well as among several tribal groups, including the Kabui (Rongmei) community residing in different parts of Manipur. These communities have preserved their traditional brewing knowledge and continue to produce rice wine using indigenous methods.

Among the rice wine-producing villages of Manipur, Andro, located on the eastern outskirts of the Imphal Valley in Imphal East District, is widely recognized for the quality and flavor of its rice wine. The village has earned a reputation as one of the most important centers of traditional rice wine production in the state. The household brewing industry serves as a significant source of income and livelihood for many families in the village.

Women constitute the backbone of this traditional industry and have been actively engaged in rice wine brewing for generations. Their contribution extends beyond economic production to the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. The income generated through brewing activities enhances household welfare and strengthens women's roles within the family and society. By contributing to family income, participating in

economic activities, and influencing household decisions, women brewers experience greater autonomy and social recognition. Therefore, the traditional rice wine brewing industry not only supports local livelihoods but also plays an important role in promoting women's empowerment in Andro.

2. Geographical setting of the study area

Andro is a historically significant village located on the eastern fringe of the Imphal Valley in the state of Manipur, India. Situated approximately 25 kilometers from Imphal City, the village occupies a relatively remote location within the valley. It is bounded by Thaiyong Village to the north, Uchon Village to the south, Kamu Koireng Village to the east, and the Nongmaiching Hills to the west. Geographically, Andro is located at approximately 24°77' North latitude and 94°06' East longitude.

The climate of Andro is characterized by a typical tropical monsoon pattern. The annual temperature range is approximately 12°C. Summers are generally warm and humid, while winters are cool and dry. The highest temperatures are usually recorded during May and occasionally extend into September. The lowest temperatures occur in January, sometimes approaching freezing point during the night, although daytime temperatures generally range between 14°C and 16°C. The village receives an average annual rainfall of about 150–200 cm, with the majority of precipitation occurring during the southwest monsoon season from June to September.

The combination of abundant rainfall and favorable temperatures creates suitable conditions for agricultural activities, particularly rice cultivation. Agriculture is the predominant occupation of the people of Andro and forms the backbone of the local economy. Approximately 98 percent of the village's geographical area is utilized for agricultural purposes. Rice is the principal crop, accounting for about 91.06 percent of the total cultivated area, followed by wheat (4.89 percent), maize (3.30 percent), and other crops (0.89 percent).

In addition to agriculture, the inhabitants of Andro are engaged in several allied and traditional economic activities. Rice wine brewing and pottery making are among the most important household-based industries practiced in the village. These activities not only supplement household income but also reflect the rich cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of the local community. Consequently, agriculture and its allied activities continue to play a crucial role in sustaining the livelihoods of the people of Andro.

3. Objectives of the Study

The overall objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the contribution of rice wine brewing to the income and livelihood of women brewers in Andro.
2. To examine the relationship between women's income levels and their participation in household decision-making and autonomy.
3. To evaluate the influence of income generation on women's political participation and social attitudes.
4. To analyze the effects of age and educational attainment on women's involvement in key decision-making activities.

To establish the above objectives following null hypotheses are postulated.

Null Hypotheses:

- (i). H_{01} : Age group has no significant effect on women's involvement in decision-making, economic activities, autonomy, political participation, and social attitudes.
- (ii). H_{02} : Education level has a significant effect on women's involvement in decision-making, economic activities, autonomy, political participation, and social attitudes.

4. Background of the Study

Women's income generation has a direct and significant impact on their empowerment. Sell and Minot (2018) argued that improvements in women's income levels enhance their participation in household decision-making, thereby contributing to overall household well-being. They further observed that factors such as age and educational attainment are positively associated with higher levels of empowerment. Understanding the determinants of women's empowerment in rural areas is therefore essential for promoting gender equality and socio-economic development.

Similarly, Wouterse (2016) highlighted that an individual's income-earning capacity is a crucial determinant of bargaining power within the household. Households do not function as a single decision-making unit; rather, individual members possess varying degrees of influence based on their economic contributions. Greater bargaining power enables women to exert their preferences in household decisions, which can positively affect welfare outcomes, including expenditure on nutrition, education, and healthcare.

Political participation is another important dimension of women's empowerment. According to Hawkey (2007), several barriers continue to limit women's participation in political processes, including lack of public and social support, traditional gender norms, low self-confidence, inadequate financial resources, limited capacity-building opportunities, restricted access to technology, gender discrimination, and violence. These factors collectively hinder women's active involvement in public affairs and decision-making processes.

Studies on women's representation and political participation have consistently emphasized their importance for achieving gender equality and strengthening democratic governance. Research indicates that higher levels of women's representation in political institutions lead to greater attention to issues affecting women. According to UN Women (n.d.), women's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy, as it ensures women's direct involvement in public decision-making and enhances accountability to women's concerns. Similarly, studies conducted by the OECD have noted that increasing women's political participation is essential for advancing issues of importance to women on national policy agendas, ultimately benefiting society as a whole (Bijlani, 2017).

In light of these studies, examining the empowerment of women rice wine brewers in Andro is both relevant and significant. Although rice wine brewing serves as an important source of livelihood and income for many women in the village, limited research has explored its implications for women's empowerment. The present study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the relationship between income generation and various dimensions of empowerment among women rice wine brewers. Particular attention is given to indicators such as decision-making power, autonomy, social attitudes, political participation, and economic empowerment. By examining these dimensions, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how traditional household-based industries can influence women's socio-economic status and empowerment in rural Manipur.

5. Research Methodology

A field survey was conducted among 342 respondents selected through a random sampling technique. However, only 308 completed questionnaires were considered for the final analysis, while 34 responses were excluded due to incomplete or insufficient information. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on various dimensions of women's empowerment. The questionnaire

covered key aspects such as economic empowerment, decision-making power, autonomy, political participation, and social attitudes. The collected data were subsequently analyzed to assess the relationship between income generation and different dimensions of empowerment among women rice wine brewers in Andro.

5.1 Research Instrument

Both open ended and closed ended questionnaire were used to get the opinion from the respondents.

6. Limitations of the Study

The present study is subject to certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings:

- i. The study is geographically confined to Andro Village in Imphal East District, Manipur. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other rice wine-producing communities or regions with different socio-economic and cultural contexts.
- ii. The study focuses exclusively on women engaged in rice wine brewing. Consequently, the experiences and empowerment outcomes of women involved in other household-based industries have not been examined.
- iii. Some respondents were reluctant to disclose detailed information regarding their income, production activities, and household affairs. This may have affected the completeness and accuracy of certain responses.
- iv. The business environment is dynamic and subject to continuous socio-economic, political, and policy changes. As a result, the findings of the study represent the conditions prevailing during the period of data collection and may change over time.
- v. Since the study relies primarily on self-reported information collected through questionnaires, there is a possibility of response bias, which may influence the accuracy of some findings.

7. Statistical Analysis

SPSS package is used to analyze the data collected through structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics like percentage and Chi- Square test are mainly used to test the hypotheses.

The results of the analysis are discussed and presented using the following tables.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Personal information		No. of respondents	Percent
Age	25-34	23	7.5
	35-44	89	28.9
	45-54	126	40.9
	55-64	59	19.2
	65 & above	11	3.6
Educational qualification	Illiterate	23	7.5
	Primary & middle	85	27.6
	Secondary	110	35.7
	Graduate	90	29.2
	Total	308	100.0

Source: Primary field survey.

From the above Table 1, majority (above 40%) of the respondents belong to the age Group 45 – 54 and above 35% of them have completed Secondary Education and above.

Table 2: Family Income, Earning, Size and Earning Members in the Family

Income & Earning		No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Monthly family income	10000 & below	20	6.5
	10001-20000	83	26.9
	20001-30000	87	28.2
	30001-40000	55	17.9
	Above 40000	63	20.5
Monthly Earning from Wine Brewing	10000 & below	99	32.1
	10001-20000	136	44.2
	20001-30000	49	15.9
	30001-40000	15	4.9
	Above 40000	9	2.9
Family members	5 & below	164	53.2
	Above 5	144	46.8

Number of earners in the family	0.00	239	77.6
	1.00	67	21.8
	2.00	2	0.6
	Total	308	100.0

Source: Primary field survey.

From the above Table 2, majority of the respondents belong to the middle income group i.e. above 26% in the income Group (Rs. 10,001 – Rs.20,000) and above 28% in Rs. 20,001 – 30,000/- while a sizeable section of the respondents (above 20%) belong to the high income bracket i.e. earning more than Rs. 40,000 per month. An almost equal sizeable section of the respondents (approx. 50 %) belongs to family size of above five (5) and below five (5). Most of the respondents (above 77%) do not have any income earner from other jobs within the family.

Table 3: Decision making on Vital Issues like Family Planning, Property, Daughter's Schooling, Marriage and Birth Controls

Involvement in Decision Making on		No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Family planning	Yes	308	100.0
	No		
Buying & Selling of property	Yes	282	91.6
	No	26	8.4
Sending daughter to school	Yes	306	99.4
	No	2	0.6
Children's marriage	Yes	308	100.0
Use of birth control methods	Yes	217	70.5
	No	91	29.5

Source: Primary field survey.

From the Table above, most of the respondents (above 90%) are involved in decision making process pertaining to vital issues on Family Planning, Buying & Selling of property, Sending daughter to school and Children's marriage. While still above 70% exercises their decision on the use of birth control methods but then nearly 30% does not have a say on this matter.

Table 4: Economic Activities

Economic Activities		No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Primary economic activity	Wine Brewing	308	100.0
Improvements in repairs, renovation in their home	Yes	215	69.8
	No	93	30.2
Confidence in meeting financial crisis	Yes	214	69.5
	No	94	30.5
Arrange Credit and Other Input in Time	Yes	308	100.0

Source: Primary field survey.

From the table above, the primary economic activity of all respondents is wine brewing. Majority (around 70%) of the respondents use the income earned from wine brewing for repairing and renovation of their homes. Besides, majority of them acknowledges the increased confidence level and they can arrange credit and other input in time.

Table 5: Autonomy of the Respondents

Autonomy		No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Crucial Decision in Purchase of raw materials, pricing of product of your activity	Yes	308	100.0
Plan Work and get things done by others	Yes	222	72.1
	No	86	27.9

Source: Primary field survey.

From the table above, all respondents experience full autonomy in matters directly link to purchase of raw materials and pricing of products. Majority (above 72%) plan their work and also get their things done by others.

Table 6: Political Participation

Political participation		No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Awareness of Reservations in Panchayats	Yes	168	54.5
	No	140	45.5
Involved in Local Level Politics	Yes	100	32.5
	No	207	67.5
Total		308	100.0

Source: Primary field survey.

From the above Table, in matters of political participation, a slight majority (around 55%) of the respondents are awareness about reservations in local self-government (Panchayats). Significantly, above 45% of the respondents is not aware of any reservations in Panchayats. Overall, above 67% of the respondents are not involved in local level politics.

Table 7: Social Attitude

Social Attitude		No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Treatment from your spouse	Usual	2	0.6
	More respectful	306	99.4
Involvement in all decisions of the family increased	Yes	307	99.7
	No	1	0.3
After generating income from wine brewing, has your self-confidence increased	Increased	308	100.0

Source: Primary field survey.

From the above Table 7, remarkable changes in the social attitude are observed. Majority of the respondents (above 99%) experiences a more respectful treatment from their spouses. Drastic increased in the involvement (above 99%) in all decisions on matters related to the family and cent percent (100%) of the respondents opined that their self-confidence has increased after income generation from wine brewing.

Table 8: Age and involvement in Decision Making, Economic activities, Autonomy, Political participation & Social Attitude

Involvement in			Age					Total	Chi-square	P-value
			I	II	III	IV	V			
Decision making	Buying & Selling of property	Yes	2 1	8 1	11 6	53	1 1	282	1.23	0.858
		No	2	8	10	6	0	26		
	Sending daughter to school	Yes	2 3	8 8	12 6	58	1 1	306	2.356	0.671
		No	0	1	0	1	0	2		
	Use of birth control methods	Yes	1 5	6 5	81	45	1 0	216	5.665	0.226
		No	8	2 4	44	14	1	91		
Economic activities	Improvements in repairs, renovation in their home	Yes	1 5	6 4	81	45	1 0	215	5.733	0.22
		No	8	2 5	45	14	1	93		
	Confidence in meeting financial crisis	Yes	1 5	6 4	80	45	1 0	214	6.241	0.182
		No	8	2 5	46	14	1	94		
Autonomy	Plan Work and get things done by others	Yes	1 6	6 3	88	45	1 0	222	2.913	0.537
		No	7	2 6	38	14	1	86		
Political participation	Awareness of Reservations in Panchayats	Yes	1 5	4 6	75	29	3	168	6.602	0.158
		No	8	4 3	51	30	8	140		

	Involved in Local Level Politics	Yes	6	38	32	21	4	100	9.789	0.279
		No	17	51	94	38	7	207		
Social Attitude	Treatment of your spouse	Usual	0	1	1	0	0	2	0.959	0.916
		More respectful	23	88	125	59	11	306		
	Involvement in all decisions of the family increased	Yes	23	89	126	59	10	307	27.086	<0.001
		No	0	0	0	0	1	1		
	Total			23	89	126	59	11	308	

Source: Primary field survey.

Significance at $P < 0.05$

(Whereas I -> 25-34 Age Group; II -> 35-44 Age Group; III -> 45-54 Age Group; IV -> 55-64 Age Group; V -> 65 & above Age Group)

From the above Table, it is observed that there is a highly significant relationship between age and increase in the involvement of decision making (Social Attitude) with p-value <0.001. While all other factors like decision making, economic activities, autonomy and political participation are found to be insignificant with p-value above 0.05.

Table 9: Education and involvement on Decision making, Economic Activity, Autonomy, Political Participation & Social Attitude

Involvement on		Education				Total	Chi-square	P-value
		Illit.	P&M	Sec.	Grad.			
Decision making	Involvement in Decision Making on Buying & Selling	Yes	21	78	105	78	4.953	0.175
		No	2	7	5	12		

	Involvement in Decision Making on Daughter Schooling	Yes	23	85	109	89	306	1.118	0.77 3
		No	0	0	1	1	2		
	Involvement in Decision Making on use of Birth Control	Yes	18	62	71	65	216	3.101	0.37 6
		No	5	22	39	25	91		
Economic activity	Improvements in repairs, renovation in their home	Yes	18	63	69	65	215	4.394	0.22 2
		No	5	22	41	25	93		
	Confidence in meeting financial crisis	Yes	18	63	69	64	214	4.177	0.24 3
		No	5	22	41	26	94		
Autonomy	Plan Work	Yes	18	66	71	67	222	5.098	0.16 5
		No	5	19	39	23	86		
Political participation	Awareness of Reservations in Panchayats	Yes	10	47	59	52	168	1.571	0.66 6
		No	13	38	51	38	140		
	Involved in Local Level Politics	Yes	7	32	31	31	101	4.505	0.60 9
		No	16	53	79	59	207		
Social attitude	Treatment of your spouse	Usual	0	0	2	0	2	3.624	0.30 5
		More respectful	23	85	108	90	306		
	Involvement in all decisions of the family increased	Yes	23	84	110	90	307	2.632	0.45 2
		No	0	1	0	0	1		
Total			23	85	110	90	308		

Source: Primary field survey

Significance at $P < 0.05$

(Whereas Illit. -> Illiteracy; P&M -> Primary and Middle; Sec. -> Secondary; Grad. -> Graduation)

From the above Table, it is observed that there is no statistical significance found between education and Involvement in Decision Making, Economic Activity, Autonomy, Political Participation and Social Attitude, as the p-value is greater than 0.05.

8. Major findings of the study

The study reveals that the majority of the respondents belong to the middle-aged group (45–54 years) and possess relatively higher educational qualifications, with most having completed secondary or higher levels of education. The findings further indicate that a large proportion of the respondents earn a monthly income ranging between ₹10,000 and ₹40,000 through rice wine brewing and related activities.

The results demonstrate that income generation through rice wine brewing has significantly contributed to the empowerment of women in Andro. Increased income has enhanced women's participation in household decision-making, particularly in matters related to family planning, the purchase and sale of property, daughters' education, children's marriage, and the use of birth control methods. Rice wine brewing serves as the primary economic activity for many respondents, and the income generated from this enterprise is often invested in the acquisition and development of immovable assets, thereby improving household economic security.

The study also finds that economic independence has strengthened women's confidence and autonomy, enabling them to exercise greater control over decisions concerning the procurement of raw materials and other business-related activities. Furthermore, positive changes in social attitudes toward women have been observed, reflecting increased recognition of their economic contributions and social roles within the family and community.

Statistical analysis indicates a significant association between age and various dimensions of empowerment, particularly decision-making, autonomy, political participation, and social attitudes. The findings suggest that as women grow older and accumulate experience, their involvement in household and community affairs tends to increase. Overall, the study concludes that income generation through rice wine brewing has played a vital role in enhancing the socio-economic status and empowerment of women in Andro village.

9. Recommendations and Conclusions

The rice wine produced in Andro is widely recognized for its distinctive quality and flavor, making it a valuable traditional product with considerable economic potential. There

exists significant scope for enhancing the market value of this product through improved packaging, branding, and marketing strategies. Such initiatives could generate higher returns for women brewers and contribute substantially to local livelihood enhancement. The use of indigenous rice varieties plays a crucial role in maintaining the quality of Andro rice wine. Furthermore, the adoption of modern production techniques, scientific equipment, and standardized quality-control measures could improve productivity, product consistency, and market competitiveness. The legalization and effective regulation of rice wine production and marketing, coupled with support for skill development, infrastructure, branding, and market access, could significantly strengthen the economic position of women brewers and contribute to broader rural development in Manipur.

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