

Life of Tribal Women in Kerala: Identity Psychosocial Disability and Social Exclusion

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ABSTRACT

We examined identity induced psychosocial disability and social exclusion among 601 tribal women, recruited using multi-stage cluster sampling. The standardized were used to measure the variables of interest. The result showed that tribal identity, stigma, discrimination, social integration, conflicts in social relations, self-esteem and quality of social life have significantly differed between married and unwed mothers. Identity, stigma, discrimination, social integration, conflicts in social relations, self-esteem and quality of social life were significantly varied across different marital groups such as married, unwed mothers and widows. The study concludes that tribal communities exert and maintain control over unwed mothers through stigmatization and discrimination for social system maintenance. The tribal groups were collectively ill represented and they experienced significant level of psychosocial disability.

Keywords: identity, stigma, discrimination, psychosocial disability, quality of social life

Historically, there was a neglect and dearth of interest in disability and related issues in social sciences. But disability discourses is gradually emerging and challenging the social construction of '*ability and disability paradigm*'. Though, the concept '*disability*' is gaining currency in academic and professional social work practice, the psychological and social disability experience in the mere absence of physical disability is largely ignored and currently located outside the ambit of broader disability discourses in India (Jose & Sultana, 2012). This becomes more critical in the context where India's socially excluded individuals and social groups such as tribes, dalits, women, sexual minorities and persons with mental illness, elders and children in difficult circumstances and so on. These individuals and groups may not experience mere physical disability; however, they do experience disability in their individual, familial and social life. These disabilities are

imposed by individuals and social groups themselves and at time by social systems such as family, educational, health, religious, justice and civil institutions (Jose & Sultana, 2012a; & Jose & Maheshwari, 2012b).

The social construction of disability is largely focused on physical handicap that critically restrict and disable physical functioning of individuals in the background of various health conditions and physical abnormalities. Thus, the research on disability in social science is predominantly concerned about individuals' restricted or limited functionality while disability experience is associated to physical handicap (Jose & Sultana, 2012a; & Jose, 2013). It is an important area of social science research and social work practice, as it is likely to result in severe ramifications if research on disability is restricted to physical functioning and its impact on individuals' mind and behaviours. Instead, there is an increasing need to explore new avenues of research

and theorization in psychological and social aspects of disability experience of marginalized communities in our society. Such systematic efforts should focus on lower castes, tribals and minority groups (Varghese, 2011b). The current study views that mere absence of physical handicap do not ensure persons quality of life and self-realization most fulfilling; therefore people who are marginalized need to be viewed as psychologically and socially disabled who are faced with a wide range of structural discrimination, disabilities and compromised psychosocial functioning (Varghese, *et al.* 2012b; & Jose *et al.* 2011).

Brief Overview of Literature

The psychosocial perspective of social exclusion viewed the interrelations and distinctions between the role of self and society in social exclusion process and psychosocial disability experiences (Jose & Sabu, 2013; Jose & Cherayi, 2013; & Jose, 2013). This is because; the major dimensions of psychosocial disability included both self-perceived or self-imposed and society ascribed or society imposed. For example, poor self-concept, poor self-esteem, negative self-image and poor sense of control over self and environment are likely to be associated with negative evaluation of one's own identity, which may result in poor social integration, restricted social participation and limited social engagement, especially outside one's own social groups. On the other hand, society at large, especially educational, justice, health and civil institutions perpetuate stigma and discrimination on account of tribal social identity and social marginalization (Pratepan, 2010). Before arriving at a definition of psychosocial disability, it is imperative to survey the literature on the critical constructs that involved in the newer conceptualization of psychosocial disability such as poor self-concept, self-esteem, self-image, and sense of control over self and environment, ethnic or caste identity, social integration, social participation and social engagement outside one's social groups (Jose & Sabu, 2013; in press).

Self Concept and Self-esteem

Self-concept is an individual's belief about himself or herself. It is indeed, one's idea about self, including

'who and what he/she is'. It is developmental. As the infant grows up, self-concept becomes more mature and complex. Being an infant, the idea of self is largely formed around his/her body while during adolescence, individual develops the idea of knowing oneself better than any other or the privileged access to one's inner self does not become firm until adolescence. Refinements become further evident during teen years of life individuals experience increase in cognitive abilities, which substantially increase children's ability to consider self from others or from an outsider's perspective. The self concept is durable, stable and resistant to change. Self esteem is one of the most important aspects of self concept. It is one's evaluation of his/her 'self concept' Self concept is merely an abstract notion of self while it is full of evaluations of person's perception of self as good or bad, or mediocre. People also have specific domains of self esteems. Identity is a definition placed on self whereas the sense of identity is one's knowledge about 'what he/she is' while it answer question of 'who you are' while self concept answer the question of 'what kind of person you are' (Baumeister,-----). Identity rests on two aspects 'sameness' (continuity) and 'difference'. Continuity means sameness over time while differentiation refers to the things that differentiate someone from the other. Thus, a strong sense of identity arises from having many sources of continuity (Baumeister,-----).

Self-esteem and Ethnic Identity

There are no conclusive evidence on how different types of ethnic devaluation affect adolescents of different ethnic and caste groups in diverse geographic settings (Wong, Eccles & Sameroff, 2003; p-1227). Furthermore, relationship between ethnic identity and global self esteem of middle and later adolescents are reasonably studied while such studies among children and early adolescents are minimal (Verkuyten, 2001). Higher level of perceived discrimination was found to associate with worrying about discrimination and negatively influenced self-esteem and predicted depression and stress among different ethnic minorities in US (Szalacha *et al.* 2003; Simons *et al.* 2002; & Wong *et al.* 2003). The victimization of children of ethnic groups by their peers in schools and other institutional contexts

are likely to induce perception of discrimination. It is found to negatively influence children's psychological wellbeing and reduce self-esteem (Verkuyten, Kinket, & Van der Wiele, 1997). Discrimination on account of (ethnic) identity is something that is beyond the control of individuals, therefore unalterable resulting sense of helplessness among those who behold such identity. Thus, identity based discrimination is an assault on, a negative response to, and something about self that is devalued (Verkuyten, 2006). Therefore, discriminatory experiences in everyday life on the basis of one's devalued and discredited identity, influence individuals to self-evaluate their caste identity, thereby negatively influence on global and ethnic self-esteems and feeling of self-worth (Verkuyten, 2006).

First generation researchers on ethnic identity and self-esteem believed that individuals with discredited identities are the passive recipients of existing prejudice and stigmatisation to which they are subjected to (Bat-Chava & Steen, 1997). The core assumption was that members of the ethnic groups internalize society's negative views about their groups and therefore show the mark of oppression (Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951). But the second generation of researchers tested this assumption systematically to the low self-esteem and found that ethnic minorities do not have low self-esteem (see Burns, 1982; Phinney, 1991; Porter & Washington, 1979, 1993; Verkuyten, 1994; 1999 & Wylie, 1979). However, Verkuyten (2001) found that ethnic self-identity serve to protect global self-esteem among ethnic minority youths (Branscombe *et al.* 1999; & Rowley *et al.* 1998). Hence, ethnic identity does not necessarily predict burden rather it act as source of global feeling of self-worth (Verkuyten, 2001). This inference was arrived at when Verkuyten (2001) examined the global self-esteem among Dutch and Turkish adolescents and children. The study revealed, while controlled for ethnic self-esteem that global self-esteem was high among Dutch participants and early ethnic self-esteem was more associated with global self-esteem among the Turkish adolescents, than their Dutch classmates.

The third generation researchers proposed several explanations. McCarthy and Yancey (1971) explained the sub-cultural explanation that stressed on the

development of in-group values and morals that prepare favourable interpretation of self while sociological explanations emphasis the importance of social networks in providing emotional and practical support in the face of negative group evaluation. This is further evident in micro-social relationships in familial and community that instill self-esteem from systems of inequality and derogation (Hughese & Demo, 1989). The social psychology views how minorities themselves experience and interpret their situations and value their ethnic identity (Crocker & Major, 1989; & Verkuyten, 1994; 1999).

Verkuyten (2001) explained ethnic self-esteem as a source for global self-esteem. Family integrity as viewed as a central aspect of cultural tendencies toward collectivism. Ethnic self-esteem was strongly related to global self-esteem in some communities than others. Self esteem derived from ethnic group membership as well as family integrity contributed independently to global personal self-esteem while being boys (i.e., gender) had ethnic and global self-esteem than girls. Early socialization was a significant predictor of positive self-evaluation that explains why self-esteem is not among ethnic minority groups. This is because; well integrated ethnic family can buffer and even filter discriminatory and ethnic messages ascribed by dominant community and provide positive evaluation of situation about one's own caste identity and ethnicity. Such efforts are likely to enhance the self-esteem of their children (Barnes, 1982). Ethnic families are likely to focus more on relevant cultural value difference between ethnic groups and the dominant groups, especially family harmony and integrity more frequently by ethnic groups than the dominant groups. In addition, collectivism characterized through sub-ordination of individual goals to the group goals, interconnectedness, sociability, family integrity, sharing stable and predetermined relationships, family harmony and dependency are more likely to be observed among non-dominant groups than the dominant social groups (e.g., Triandis, 1994; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). The increased sense of collectivism among non-dominant groups were associated with psychological wellbeing, less related to anomy, loneliness and alienation (Triandis *et al.* 1985),

social support (Sinha & Verma, 1994), increased life satisfaction (Verkuten & Kwa, 1994) and acculturation transition (Phalet & Hagendoorn, 1996).

Persons with a collectivist orientation reported higher well-being in acculturation transitions (Phalet & Hagendoorn, 1996) and experienced more social support and positive sense of well-being than low collectivists (Verkuyten, 2001). Further, collectivism and life satisfaction were mediated by group-related self-esteem, because collectivist individuals were more likely to be in relation to their in-groups, and finally evaluation of in-group membership was particularly important for well-being of collectivists (Bettencourt & Dorr, 1997). Evidently, global self-esteem may be differentiated empirically from ethnic self-esteem, i.e., how an individual feels about himself in general and as a member of a specific non-dominant social group (Wylie, 1979). Besides, associations have been reported between group identities related self-esteem and global self-esteem (see Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Verkuyten, 1995). Finally, ethnic identity, being a part of the self-concept, contributing to global self-esteem (Verkuyten, 2001).

Social Integration

The structural perspective views social integration as consequences of differences in socioeconomic opportunities. It varyingly influences the differences in ethnic and minority groups. Inequitable access to wealth, jobs, housing and privileges are viewed as structural constraints to non-dominant and marginalized social groups to socially integrate. It is further associated with socio-cultural aspects and concerns, cultural habits, values, belief system, religion and language (Algan, Bisin, & Verdier,-----). From behavioural perspective, social integration includes language spoken at homes, religious practices, fertility behaviour, educational achievements, gender gaps in education, labour market participation, prevalence of female labour supply, social participation and marriage behaviours (Algan, Bisin, & Verdier,---). However, the present study views social integration from relatively micro level as conceptualized by (Guralnick, 1999). The indicators of social integration viz., active acceptance, passive integration, exclusion,

rejection; varying strengths of relationships (such as acquaintanceship and intimate friendship); and context in which peer interaction take places. Classification of these constructs were made under three major concepts viz., connectedness or extend of peer interactions, the quality of interpersonal relationships and the nature of adjustment that occurs during social exchange (Algan, Bisin, & Verdier,-----).

Situating within this conceptualization, the present study operationalized the construct from both subjective (quality of interpersonal relationship perspective) to objective (connectedness or extent of peer relationships, and level of participation in peer groups) social integration. As a result, the construct social integration was operationalized first, as tribal women's perceived adequacy of friends, perception of popularity, influence and acceptance of self among other students and perceived difficulty to make friends. Secondly, subjective social integration was defined as the frequency of the subjective feelings and experience of tribal women whether they felt loved and wanted, felt isolated from others, felt no one knows them well, felt the part of groups or friends, wished for more friends, restrict self from interacting with others, number of significant people from whom these children could get critical support and concerns (O'Brien *et al.* 1993; & Jose, 2013; in press). Finally, objective social integration was defined as "number of social organisation where the women had membership and the level of participation in terms of its frequency in meeting and in other programmes (O'Brien *et al.* 1993; & Jose, 2013; in press).

Hence, the present study was an effort to examine the relative effect of tribal and marital identity of women in their psychological and social aspects of everyday life. First, the study examined how marital identity i.e., being unwed mother, and widow induced and maintained psychological and social disability in everyday life. The study examined how quality of social life varied across different marital groups of tribal women. Findings in these areas are expected to further strengthen the psychosocial perspective on social exclusion wherein identity plays its central role in disability experience and social exclusion (Varghese, 2012b; & Jose *et al.* 2011).

METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional explanatory study was conducted to examine the role of tribal women's marital identities in their psychosocial disability experience. The universe constituted tribal women in Wayanadu district of Kerala, India. Sample was defined as "tribal women aged 16 years and above, living in the district of Wayanadu, who either married or unmarried, and consented for participation in the study." Tribal women were categorized into two, viz., married and unwed tribal mothers. Unwed mother was defined as: 'tribal woman or girl who was conceived and gave birth to one or more children outside the wedlock of marriage by a man of same tribe, or man of other tribe or a man of non-tribe' (Jose *et al.* 2009c; p-2; & Jose *et al.* 2010a). The married mother was defined as 'tribal women who entered into marital relationship as per the tribal norms and cultural practices'.

Following the eligibility criteria, 601 tribal women were selected. It included 301 unwed mothers and 300 tribal women. Married tribal mothers were selected from 'three village panchayat (Local administrative unit). From each village panchayat, two tribal hamlets were randomly selected constituting 6 tribal hamlets. Using quasi-random sampling procedure, every 10th household was selected which constituted a sample size of 300. Unwed mothers were identified and selected for the study by Adi Vasi Youvajana Samithi (AYS) a field NGOs in Wayanadu. Multistage cluster sampling helped to reduce the geographic size without compromising with representativeness. But this representative sampling procedure was not feasible for selecting unwed mothers.

Interview was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, we trained 10 post graduate social work trainees through 3 day workshop on research methodology and interview methods. Interviewers' group consisted of one male and nine female trainees. They interviewed 300 tribal women. Subsequently, we approached AYS and recruited six female staff, and trained them in interview techniques. These staff had previous experience in field survey projects and research studies. They developed a sampling frame with list of unwed mothers identified by the department of SC/ST Welfare, government of Kerala and conducted 300 interviews with unwed mothers.

Protection of participants: All participants were educated about the purpose and objectives of the study in local language. All participants were informed about the direct and indirect benefits and possible risks associated with, by participating in this study. Informed consent was obtained in writing from each participant before the study process was initiated.

The sub-domains of the structured interview schedule were selected from various standardized scales. Variable selection was guided by psychosocial perspective on social exclusion (Varghese, 2011b; & Jose, Varghese, & Sabu, 2011). Key variables measured in this study were Dalit social identity, stigma, discrimination, psychosocial disability in terms of nature of social relations, subjective and objective social integration, self-esteem and finally the quality of social life. The following section provides a detailed description of each scales/subscales selected for the current study.

Socio-demographic profile: A socio-demographic schedule was developed that contained the variables such as age, education, marital status, monthly individual and family income, ethnic, marital, social group backgrounds, motherhood status, occupation, religion, family type, place of residence, number of working days in a month and hours of work per day.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992): It is a 12 item measurement developed by Phinney in 1992. It consistently showed good reliability with alphas above 0.80 across a wide range of ethnic groups and ages. It consisted two factors viz., ethnic identity search (a developmental and cognitive component) and affirmation, belonging and commitment (an affective component). The factor on ethnic identity search include items such as 1, 2, 4, 8, and 10; and affirmation, belonging, and commitment, items 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12. None of the items are reversed.

Berger HIV Stigma Scale (Berger, *et al.* 2001) is a 40-item Likert-type rating scale intended to measure generalized perceived stigma with response categories of 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree. It consists of 4 subscales with a total score ranging from 40 to 160, with a coefficient alpha of 0.96, and high score obtained shows high stigma perceived

by the informants. The 40-item instrument provided evidence of internal consistency reliability. In the present study, only two domains were selected from the 40-item actual scale (i.e., personalized stigma subscale with 18 items and negative self-image subscale with 13 items). These selected subscales were face validated to measure perceived stigma of tribal women. Personalized stigma subscale is an 18-item subscale that measures personalized stigma related to the experience of rejection for having a stigmatised trait. The score ranged from 18 to 72 with a coefficient alpha of 0.93. Second, negative self-image subscale is a 13-item subscale that measures negative self-image related to feeling bad about oneself because of being unwed. The score ranged from 13 to 52 with an alpha coefficient of 0.91.

Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a ten items Likert type measurement, was originally designed to measure the adolescents' global feeling of self worth. Ten first person's statement elicits a 4-point response viz., "strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree". In order to reduce acquiescence effect, the items were evenly divided between being negatively and positively worded in content. The scores ranged from 10-30 with high score indicating higher self-esteem.

Social relationship scale (O' Brian *et al.* 1993): Support and conflict items of the social relationship scale were drawn from surveys conducted at The University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research at the time of scale development, including the work of Antonucci *et al.* (1993). The first item was phrased as "how many groups or organisations do you belong to just because you want to--like clubs, church groups, lodges, etc.?" The responses were "none=1", "1 group=2", "2 or more groups=3". The second item was phrased as "how active are you in the groups or clubs you belong to? The responses were "very active--I attend most meetings=1", "fairly active--I attend fairly often=2", "not active--I belong but hardly ever go=3" and inappropriate question--the respondent does not belong to any groups=4". The sub-domain's alpha value was 0.89.

Quality of Community Life Questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed by Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) in 1994. This instrument

consists of eleven factors. They are relationship with colleagues, community efforts for sanitation, support of relatives, support of family, support of neighbours, relation with friends, medical and other facilities, social discrimination, social contact, and community information, law and order problems, and caste, and religion. Each factor consists of 3 questions; hence the questionnaire consists of a total of 33 questions. Three point responses were used for measuring each question. They are 'Not at all', 'To some extent', and 'Very much'. Questions are structured both positively, and negatively. The score range from 30 to 99. Internal consistency was established through squared multiple correlation of each items, showed all items are significantly correlated. Factor validity and concurrent validity were established.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, range and standard deviation. Correlation was studied using Pearson's correlation while difference and variance were studied using independent sample *t* test, analysis of variance (one way) and post hoc tests.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the comparative socio-demographic profiles of the indigenous tribal women based on their motherhood status. Among married mothers, mean age was 35.69 (SD=12.1) years while mean age of the unwed mothers was 41.34 (SD=10.1) years. The *t* test for independent samples shows a statistically significant difference on the age of married and unwed tribal mothers ($t=-5.915$; $df(542)$; & $p<.001$). The result implies that unwed mothers had higher mean age than the married mothers. Education was measured in completed years in formal schools. The mean years of education for married mothers was 4.27 (SD=4.1) years and for unwed mothers, mean years of education was 5.41(SD=3.8) years. The *t* test for independent samples shows a significant mean difference on completed years of education between married and unwed mothers ($t=-2.348$; $df(378)$; & $p<.019$). The result indicates that unwed mothers had higher mean years of completed education than married tribal women.

Table 1: Shows the socio-demographic profile of the tribal women

Demographic variable	Married Mothers			Unwed Mothers			t-value	(df)	Sig.
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD			
Age (in years)	301	35.69	12.13	243	41.34	10.1	-5.915	(542)	.001
Education (in years)	290	4.27	4.093	90	5.41	3.8	-2.348	(378)	.019
Daily earning (₹)	270	94.55	89.27	192	157.15	31.3	-10.642	(460)	.001
Working days per week	269	2.81	2.53	192	5.16	3.9	-7.294	(459)	.001
Working hours per day	269	4.99	3.99	620	28.60	6.7	-6.793	(469)	.001
Monthly income (₹)	270	1269.71	897.719	122	19.2	1505.8	-5.980	(459)	.001

The mean earning per day for married mothers was ₹ 94.55 (SD=89.27) while unwed mothers earned a mean income of ₹ 157.15 and SD of ₹ 31.3. It shows a wide dispersion of income earned by both married and unmarried mothers. This is because; many of the tribal women, especially married mother category were homemakers who did not go outside home for coolie labourer. The mode of the income per day was ₹ 150. The *t* test for independent samples shows a significant mean difference on earning per day between married and unwed mothers ($t=-10.642$; df (460); & $p<.001$). Tribal women's number of working days per week was significantly differed between married and unwed mothers ($t=-7.294$; df (459); & $p<.001$). The mean number of working days per week for married mothers was 2.81 (SD=2.53) while for unwed mothers, the mean age was 5.16 (SD=3.9) days. The result implies that unwed mothers were likely to work more number of days in a week than married mothers.

The working hours per day was also significantly differed between married and unwed mothers ($t=-6.793$; df (469); & $p<.001$). The descriptive scores show that married mothers spent on an average of 4.99 (SD=3.996) working hours per day while unwed mothers spent a mean of 8.60 (SD=6.7) working hours per day. This is a noticeable difference on the amount of working hours per day spent by married and unmarried mothers. Further, a wide range of working hours was observed in standard deviation. It reveals that in both groups of women, especially in married group, many were homemakers who did not engage in paid work outside households, at least on a regular basis. Finally, a significant difference was found on monthly income

between married and unwed mothers ($t=-5.980$; df (459); & $p<.001$). The descriptive scores show that married mothers reported a mean monthly income of ₹ 1269.7 (SD=1897.7) while for unwed mothers, mean monthly income was ₹ 2219.2 (SD=1505.8). However, standard deviation indicates a wide dispersion on earning for both marital groups.

Table 2: Social profile of tribal women

Social profile			Social profile		
<i>Educational grades</i>	N	%	<i>Motherhood status</i>	N	%
Illiterates	311	51.6	Married mother	301	49.9
Read & write	44	7.3	Unwed mothers	244	40.5
Primary school	120	19.9	Single parent mother	10	1.7
Secondary school	91	15.1	Childless women	11	1.9
Intermediate	24	4.0	Not yet conceived	16	2.7
Undergraduate	07	1.2	Total	582	100
Total	507	100	—	—	—
<i>Marital status</i>			<i>type of occupations</i>		
Married	392	65.0	House maid	168	27.9
Unmarried	165	27.4	Agricultural coolie	277	45.9
Minor	05	0.8	Manual labourer	59	9.8
Widows	25	4.2	Wild produce collection	09	1.5
Separated	14	2.3	Total	513	85.1
Total	601	100	—	—	—

Table 2 shows the social profile of the tribal women. Educational profile indicates that most of the tribal women (51.6 per cent) were illiterates while another

Table 3: Shows group differences on key variables between married and unwed mothers

Sub-domains	Married Mothers			Unwed Mothers			t-value	(df)	Sig.
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD			
Identity perception	286	28.5	4.3	226	34.4	4.6	-14.977	(510)	.001
Perceived stigma	283	65.8	12.5	204	83.6	16.1	-13.156*	(485)	.001
Discrimination	230	2.6	2.5	170	4.8	1.94	-9.612*	(398)	.001
Social integration	301	25.85	4.96	211	27.21	4.12	-3.376*	(510)	.001
Conflicts in SR	298	20.12	4.38	237	23.54	23.54	-10.064*	(533)	.001
Self esteem	298	14.26	3.16	217	13.98	1.72	1.282*	(513)	.001
Quality of social life	235	69.03	9.75	109	60.42	7.24	9.147*	(342)	.001

7.3 per cent (n=44) were literate who acquired the knowledge of reading and writing while they had no formal education. Nearly 20 per cent reported to have completed their primary education while 15.1 per cent completed their secondary education. But only 4 per cent (n=24) had their intermediate education while seven participants were graduated. About 65 per cent (n=392) of the tribal women were married, 27.4 per cent (n=165) were unmarried, five participants were minors (<18 yrs) and 4.2 per cent were widows. Another 2.3 percent were separated tribal women. Married mothers constituted about 50 per cent (n=301) and unwed mothers formed 40.5 per cent (n=244) of the participants. About 28 per cent of the participants were housemaids, 45.9 per cent were agricultural coolies, and 9.8 per cent were manual laborers.

Table 3 shows the mean difference on selected variables between married and unwed tribal mothers. Tribal identity perception was significantly differed between married and unwed tribal women (t=-14.977; df(485); & p<.001). The mean difference shows that unwed mothers had better tribal identity perception (mean=34.4) than married mothers (mean=28.5). But on perceived stigma, t' test reveals a significant difference (t=-13.156; df (485); & p<.001) between married and unwed mothers experienced high amount of perceived stigma (mean=83.6) than married mothers (mean=65.8). This is because; unwed mothers rated their stigma attached to unwed motherhood status while married tribal women rated their perceived stigma attached to their tribal identity.

Discrimination was differed between married and unwed tribal women (t= -9.612; df (398); & p<.001). Groups difference shows that unwed mothers experienced substantial amount of discrimination (mean=4.8) than married mothers (mean=2.6). Social integration was differed between married and unwed mothers (t=-3.376; df(510); & p<.001). The groups' difference shows that unwed mothers reported better social integration (mean=27.21) than married mothers (mean=25.85). Conflicts in social relationships was also significantly differed between married and unwed mothers (t=-10.064; df(533); p<.001). The groups' mean difference shows that unwed mothers experienced high amount of conflicts in social relationships (mean=23.54) than married mothers (mean=20.12). Self-esteem on the other hand, was found to significantly differed between married and unwed mothers (t=1.282; df (513); & p<.001). The groups' mean difference shows that married mothers had better self-esteem (mean=14.26) than unwed mothers (mean=13.98). Quality of social life was found to be significantly differed between married and unwed mothers (t=-9.147; df(342); & p<.001). The groups' mean difference shows that married mothers enjoyed better quality social life (mean=69.03) than unwed mothers (mean=60.42).

Table 4 shows the analysis of variance of selected variables across different marital group viz., married, unmarried and separated tribal women. Tribal women's identity was significantly varied across different marital groups viz., married, unmarried and separated tribal women (F=23.578; df(566); & p<.001).

Table 4: Shows the variance of selected variables on different marital groups

Variables	F-statistic	df	Sig.
Tribal identity	23.578	(566)	.001
Perceived stigma	14.045	(538)	.001
Everyday life discrimination	6.709	(291)	.001
Life event discrimination	9.440	(445)	.001
Social integration	8.526	(567)	.001
Conflicts in SR	10.459	(588)	.001
Self esteem	7.247	(565)	.001
Quality of social life	7.520	(382)	.001

Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple group comparisons reveal significant mean difference between married and unmarried women on tribal identity ($MD = -2.69986$; & $p < .001$) while married and separated women's tribal identity perceptions were significantly differed ($MD = 2.71680$; & $p < .001$). There was a significant mean difference on tribal identity between unmarried and separated tribal women ($MD = 5.41667$; & $p < .001$).

Perceived stigma was significantly varied among tribal women who belongs to different marital groups ($F = 14.045$; $df(538)$; & $p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple group comparisons reveal significant mean difference between married and unmarried women on perceived stigma associated to tribal identity ($MD = -8.12778$; & $p < .001$) while no significant mean difference was observed between married and separated women ($MD = 1.93304$; & $p = 1$). There was a significant mean difference between unmarried and separated tribal women on perceived stigma ($MD = -10.06082$; & $p < .001$).

Tribal women's experience of everyday life discrimination was significantly varied across different marital groups ($F = 6.709$; $df(291)$; & $p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple group comparisons reveal significant mean difference between married and separated women on the experience of everyday life discrimination ($MD = -4.77259$; & $p < .011$). Similarly, a significant difference was found between unmarried and separated tribal women on everyday life discrimination ($MD = -4.77259$; & $p < .002$). Tribal women's life event discrimination was significantly varied across different marital groups ($F = 9.440$; $df(445)$; & $p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple group comparisons reveal significant mean

difference between married and unmarried tribal women ($MD = -1.01285$; & $p < .001$). No such significant group difference was found between married and separated marital groups. There was a significant group difference between unmarried and separated marital groups ($MD = 1.75325$; & $p < .001$).

Tribal women's amount of social integration was significantly varied across different marital groups, viz., married, unmarried and separated women ($F = 8.526$; $df(567)$; & $p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple subgroup comparison reveals that there was no significant group difference between married and unmarried women on social integration. But there was a significant group difference between married and separated women ($MD = 2.76161$; & $p < .001$). There was a significant group difference between unmarried and separated marital groups ($MD = 3.28317$; & $p < .001$). Tribal women's conflicts in relationships was significantly varied across different marital groups ($F = 10.459$; $df(588)$; & $p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple group comparisons reveal a significant mean difference between married and unmarried women on relationship conflicts ($MD = -1.83536$; & $p < .001$). But there was no significant group difference on conflicts in social relations between married and separated women.

Self esteem was significantly varied across different marital groups ($F = 7.247$; $df(565)$; & $p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple group comparisons reveal that no significant group difference between married and unmarried women on self-esteem. While a significant group difference on self-esteem was observed between married and separated women. It suggests that married women were likely to have better self-esteem than the separated tribal women ($MD = -1.328$; & $p < .011$). Similarly, a statistically significant mean difference was observed between unmarried and separated tribal women on self-esteem ($MD = 1.847$; & $p < .001$) wherein unmarried women were likely to have higher self-esteem than separated women.

The quality of social life was found significantly varied across different marital groups ($F = 7.520$; $df(382)$; & $p < .001$). Bonferroni post hoc test for multiple group comparisons reveal that the quality of social life of married

and unmarried women were significantly differed. It implied that married women had better quality of social life than unmarried women ($MD=4.72835$; & $p<.001$). But there was no group difference on quality of social life between married and separated women. Further, there was no group mean difference on quality of life between unmarried and separated women.

DISCUSSION

This discussion was organised into three sections. It discussed the results on the nature and directions of marital group wise differences of critical study variables. It further discussed the results of significant variance of study variables across different marital status groups. Finally, the discussion drew key inferences to conclude the study with its implications.

Surprisingly, the present study showed that unwed mothers rated better on tribal identity than tribal women. It indicated that unwed mothers had positive tribal identity perceptions than married women. Further, identity was significantly varied across different marital groups such as married, unmarried and separated. Post hoc test revealed significant mean differences between married and unmarried, married and separated and unmarried and separated women on positive identity.

Evidently, unwed motherhood as an identity was heavily discredited and devalued within and outside tribal communities (Jose *et al.* 2010a; Jose, Varghese & Sabu, 2011; & Jose *et al.* 2012). Unwed mothers experienced high level of personalized stigma and negative self-image (Jose *et al.* 2009; & Praveen, 2013) which substantially reduced their quality of life (Praveen, 2013). Present study also revealed that unwed mothers experienced substantial amount of perceived stigma compared to other tribal women. The perceived stigma was significantly varied among tribal women who belonged to different marital groups. Post hoc test revealed significant mean difference between married and unmarried, and unmarried and separated tribal women on perceived stigma. Result suggested that separated and unmarried women experienced significantly high amount of perceived stigma than married women.

Discrimination was differed between married and unwed tribal women. It implied that unwed mothers experienced significant amount of discrimination than married mothers. A plausible explanation may be that tribal unwed mothers bear two disabling identities viz., their individual identity as unwed mothers and collective identity as tribal women. The former identity disposed them vulnerable to discrimination within family, in neighbourhood and in tribal communities (Jose *et al.* 2009) whereas the latter one disposed them vulnerable to discrimination outside the community i.e., among dominant communities (Jose *et al.* 2013; Cherayi, 2013; & Sabu *et al.* 2012). Thus, unwed mothers experienced multiple disabling effects simultaneously due to their discredited individual and collective identities. The variance of sub-dimensions of discrimination across different marital status showed that tribal women's experience of everyday life discrimination was significantly varied across different marital groups. Post hoc test revealed a significant mean difference between married and separated, unmarried and separated women on everyday life discrimination. Consistently, the life event discrimination was significantly varied across different marital groups. Post hoc test revealed a significant mean difference between married and unmarried, and unmarried and separated women. These results suggested that marital status have significant influence in tribal women's experience of discrimination in everyday life.

Conflict in social relationship was significantly differed between married and unwed mothers, which indicated that unwed mothers experienced high amount of conflicts in social relationships than married mothers. Result suggested that unwed mothers were more likely to have difficult interpersonal relationships with family, spouse, relatives and neighbours. Increased personalization of stigma, negative self-image and frequent discrimination in everyday life were likely to dispose unwed mothers increasingly vulnerable to conflicts in social relationships. In addition, tribal women's conflicts in relationships were significantly varied across different marital groups. Post hoc test revealed a significant mean difference between married and unmarried women on relationship conflicts while there was no such significant

group difference on conflicts in social relations between married and separated women. It evidently suggested that unwed mothers were targets of stigma and discrimination therefore, their social relations were likely to be characterized by frequent conflicts with family members, spouses and other important people in their life.

However, we have surprisingly found that social integration was differed between married and unwed mothers with a direction that unwed mothers reported better social integration than married mothers. Plausible explanation may be traced from the nature of social integration measurement which was objective in nature. The construct social integration was measured as tribal women's perceived adequacy of friends, perception of popularity, influence and acceptance of self among others and perceived difficulty to make friends (O'Brien *et al.* 1993; & Jose, 2013; in press). It strengthened the inference that unwed mothers were able to avail social support systems through peers. But we need further careful and context specific examination on this aspect in future research. Besides, social integration was significantly varied across different marital groups. Post hoc test revealed a significant group difference between married and separated, and unmarried and separated women while there was no significant difference between married and unmarried women.

Previous studies showed that unwed mothers acquired high level of personal autonomy, better decision making roles in households and greater influence in children's education. Such studies also indicated overall better empowerment of unwed mothers than married tribal women (Jose *et al.* 2010a; & Jose *et al.* 2010b). In contrary, the present study revealed that self-esteem was significantly differed between married and unwed mothers. It implied that married mothers had better self-esteem than unwed mothers. It may be because; unwed mothers were likely to develop negative self-image which would in turn result in negative evaluation of self-resulting poor self-esteem (Verkuyten, 2001). Furthermore, self-esteem was significantly varied across different marital groups. Post hoc test revealed a significant group difference on self-esteem between married and separated women. It implied that married

women were likely to have better self-esteem than the separated tribal women wherein unmarried women were likely to have higher self-esteem than separated women. Marital separation was conventionally unacceptable in society as marriage ties were viewed sacred. Therefore, those who were separated were likely to develop negative self-image, self-blame and negative self-concept which would in turn resulted in negative evaluation of self (Phinny, 1992; Verkuyten, 2001; & Jose, 2013).

Evidence suggested that unwed mothers had reduced level of quality of life while experienced prolonged stress, adjustment problems in emotional and social aspects of life (Praveen, 2013). They were often targeted within community as the objective of sexual violence and discrimination (Jose, Varghese & Sabu, 2011b). They experienced substantial accumulation of psychosocial disabilities in everyday life (Jose *et al.* 2011a; & Cherayi, 2013). Quality of social life was comparatively less since they had poor social support from family, spouse and relatives. Their social contacts were restricted due to stigmatisation and discriminatory attitude of society (Jose *et al.* 2010a; & Jose *et al.* 2010b). In line with these findings, the present revealed that unwed mothers enjoyed decreased quality of social life in comparison to other tribal women in community. Furthermore, quality of social life was found significantly varied across different marital groups whereas post hoc test revealed that the quality of social life between married and unmarried women were significantly differed. It implied that married women had better quality of social life than unmarried women.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, unwed mothers were disposed to several psychosocial disabilities in everyday life. The relative vulnerability of unwed mothers strengthened the inference that, for social system maintenance, premarital and extramarital sexual relationships including out of the wedlock relationships, consequent pregnancies and childbearing are universally ostracized through familial and social regulations, monitoring and social pressure across cultures (Jose *et al.* 2012; & Sabu *et al.* 2012). Though, severity may vary from culture to culture

and society to society (Jose *et al.* 2013; in press), such individuals and groups are pushed out of the social norms while punishments are meted out in the forms of stigmatisation, discrimination and social distancing (Jose, Vinod & Sabu, 2012). Stigmatisation and social distancing of such expelled individuals and groups were based on perceived social morals and values that discredit and reduce them into tainted sub-humans, thereby maintaining social practices and institutions as traditionally valued (Jose *et al.* 2012; & Major & Eccleston, 2005). Unwed motherhood was a discredited and devalued individual identity (Goffman, 1963; Jose *et al.* 2009; & Jose, Vinod & Sabu, 2012), which in turn produced a series of psychosocial disability experience in the life of unwed mothers (Jose *et al.* 2011b; Praveen, 2012; Sabu *et al.* 2012; & Cherayi, 2013).

Evidently, tribal community exerts and maintains control over unwed mothers (so called deviant members) through stigmatisation and discrimination for system maintenance. This is because; individuals who challenge the cultural worldview by thinking or by behaving differently were susceptible to stigmatisation and social exclusion (Major & Eccleston, 2005). Tribal groups perceived that premarital pregnancies and subsequent child bearing, especially through inter-tribal and out-group sexual unions were threatening the traditional social organisations. Hence, punishing members who think and behave against such traditional or cultural worldviews such as tribal women with pre-marital pregnancies were ostracized, stigmatised and excluded. Furthermore, unwed motherhood as an individual identity induced and maintained severe psychological and social disability experience. It included high level of stigma and discrimination, increased conflicts in social relationships, reduced self-esteem and quality social life within their respective communities or social groups. As a result, unwed mothers were increasingly targeted to societal stigmatisation and discrimination within in-groups than tribal identity which was subjected to discrimination in out-groups.

Tribal identity on the other hand, was collectively represented therefore within group; its members were neither stigmatised nor discriminated. However, in-group in its interaction with dominant out-groups,

were collectively ill-represented, stigmatised and discriminated due to their non-dominant ethnic tribal identity. Cognitive adaptation model by Kurzban and Leary (2001) was a useful perspective that helps to explain this psychosocial disability experience of tribal women through one of the three cognitive adaptations of dominant groups. Tribal people in general and tribal women in particular are viewed poor partners for social exchange. It was likely to result in avoidance of those who were unpredictable and those who were perceived to have nothing to give (Major & Eccleston, 2005; p-69). Hence, the study concluded that tribal women in general and unwed mothers in particular were socially excluded, while they experience psychosocial disability in their everyday life.

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