

Problems and Prospects of Tribal Women Entrepreneurs in Kalahandi District of Odisha

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Abstract

In many developing countries, women are typically expected to contribute to the financial stability of their families only when it's absolutely necessary. The less affluent the family, the more reliant they are on the income earned by women. It is crucial to make efforts to increase job opportunities to empower impoverished women to generate income. Numerous initiatives and programs have been initiated to encourage self-employment among women. In this context, it is essential to emphasize the promotion of women's entrepreneurship, regardless of their educational background. Various government agencies at the state and central levels, as well as non-governmental organizations, are actively involved in advancing entrepreneurship among women. The prevalence of women-owned businesses is on a sharp rise in nearly every country. In developed nations, women are widely recognized and hold prominent positions in the business world. However, women entrepreneurs in Odisha are encountering substantial challenges, including social and personal barriers, marketing obstacles, financial constraints, and production issues. Moreover, tribal women entrepreneurs face even more complex issues as times change. These additional challenges can be elaborated upon, including limited knowledge and experience, inadequate transportation infrastructure, liquidity and financial difficulties, low levels of education, a reluctance to take risks, a lack of self-confidence, a lack of ambition, family commitments, and financial constraints. Choosing the correct business opportunity for a venture can yield substantial rewards in the future. Initiating women-led businesses in tribal regions of Odisha can contribute to the enhancement of socio-economic conditions within these tribal areas. This paper aims to delve into the issue of fostering entrepreneurship among tribal women in Odisha and propose practical solutions to enhance the current state of tribal affairs. Additionally, it aims to align with the existing policy framework of the state for the betterment of the overall societal well-being.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Tribal Women, Opportunities, Challenges, Job Prospects, Rural and Economic Progress

Introduction

The tribal communities have historically been subjected to exploitation by landlords and moneylenders and are predominantly located in remote regions across the country. Traditionally, their means of sustenance revolved around forest resources and hunting. These various tribal subgroups, along with their local dialects, exist in conditions of extreme poverty with very limited resources to rely on. The subject matter of this paper is notably challenging due to the inherent complexity of entrepreneurship, which is a demanding endeavour. This complexity is even more pronounced when addressing the tribal population, particularly tribal women. While some remedial measures have been implemented to enhance the socio-economic conditions of tribal populations, there is still much work to be done. My current research aims to

delve into the challenges of fostering entrepreneurship among tribal women in Odisha and propose practical solutions to improve the current state of tribal affairs. This research aligns with the existing policy framework aimed at uplifting the overall welfare of society.

Defining Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs can be described as women, either individually or in a collective, who take the initiative to establish, organize, and manage a business venture. To be recognized as women entrepreneurs, women are expected to introduce, pioneer, or adopt economic activities. According to the government of India, a women entrepreneur is characterized as someone who owns and controls an enterprise, with women holding at least fifty-one percent of the financial interest and contributing significantly to the employment opportunities within the enterprise. In contemporary India, especially in urban areas, women have had access to education and training. This empowerment has enabled urban Indian women to engage in tasks that were once considered the exclusive domain of men. Over time, educated women have become more ambitious, gained experience, developed essential skills, and built self-confidence.

Women Entrepreneurship

Active involvement and participation in the development process are crucial for women's empowerment and the improvement of their status in society. In this context, there are two significant avenues for utilizing human resources: wage employment and self-employment. Given the limited availability of employment opportunities, self-employment emerges as the most promising option. Self-employment entails establishing and running one's own business, transforming job seekers into entrepreneurs and, in some cases, employers. Numerous initiatives and programs have been initiated to encourage self-employment among women.

In this regard, the promotion of women's entrepreneurship, regardless of their educational background, is an urgent necessity. Both government institutions at the state and central levels and non-

governmental organizations are actively involved in promoting entrepreneurship among women. Entrepreneurship development programs organized by governmental bodies, along with grassroots-level initiatives by various agencies, have significantly propelled the growth of entrepreneurship among women.

Review of Literature

(Trivedi) shares his perspective on entrepreneurship within tribal communities, as illustrated through a case study of the Bhil tribe in Rajasthan. Trivedi suggests that entrepreneurship represents an unconventional concept for tribal populations. With the advent of development, they have started to adopt new crops and engage in the commercialization and mechanization of their agricultural methods. This economic transformation has propelled the tribal communities toward a capitalist economy. As a result, capitalism has introduced class divisions among these tribal groups. Trivedi book delves into the emergence of capitalism within tribal communities and explores its social ramifications, particularly in terms of class formation.

(Chaudhauri) represents a collaborative effort by Indian scholars. Their aim is to comprehensively capture the evolving landscape of tribal communities while addressing a wide range of topics related to tribal life. These topics encompass tribal economy, agricultural practices, political dynamics, ethnic identity, environmental considerations, educational initiatives, technology transfer, social and political movements, religious beliefs, and cultural rituals. They present this information within an indigenous framework that is more eloquent, offering both diagnostic insights and potential solutions. By utilizing contemporary concepts and research tools from anthropology and related fields, the authors provide a fresh perspective on the intricate dynamics at both the micro and macro levels within India's tribal communities.

(Dangi and Ritika) an attempt has been made to focus on the growth and performance of MSMEs in India and the problems and challenges which are faced by women entrepreneurs in India. It also focuses on initiatives taken by the government

for women entrepreneurs. From this study it can be concluded that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are contributing to the economic growth and development of Indian economy. Women Entrepreneurs who were traditionally kept behind the four walls of their houses, now in modern society are capable of managing both their family and business.

In one of the studies it is found that rural women were endowed with invaluable talent of weaving masterpieces on textiles. They effortlessly infused their creativity into weaving colourful pieces for near and dear ones. (Mishra and Mohapatra).

In rural areas, where there are no big industries because of their remote location, lack of good transportation system, proximity to the market etc. self-employment or entrepreneurship works as an alternative for employment. Self employment is an employment generator for rural masses (Rathee and Yadav). For empowerment of women role of Textile industry and its rapid growth was highlighted giving a prosperous prospect to the women to excel to achieve respect, dignity in the society (Neenu).

The findings suggest that greater participation of rural female participation among the workforce and new venture creation could be possibly achieved if the elements in the entrepreneurial ecosystem identify the methods to enable, support and promote startup entrepreneurship opportunities for the rural women in Oman. The sustainable policies in this context for the gender progression in the Omani society which comprises 50% of the indigenous population to fully engage with the socio-economic development of the Sultanate (Ghouse et al.).

Objectives

- Evaluate the status of women of working age in rural tribal areas within the kalahandi districts.
- Analyse the problems faced by women as entrepreneur in Bhawanipatna block of Kalahandi district
- Explore the opportunities that the women entrepreneurs get in Bhawanipatna block of Kalahandi district

Methodology

Since this study focuses on women entrepreneurs in tribal areas, our research is limited exclusively

to these tribal regions. Additionally, we narrow our focus to specific districts within Odisha, particularly Kalahandi district, which has a higher concentration of tribal inhabitants. The primary objective of this research was to pinpoint the primary challenges and obstacles confronting women entrepreneurs. To gather information from individual respondents, our research team employed non-probability sampling techniques. In this context, the non-probability samples we selected were convenience samples, which are not restricted and are chosen for their convenience and accessibility.

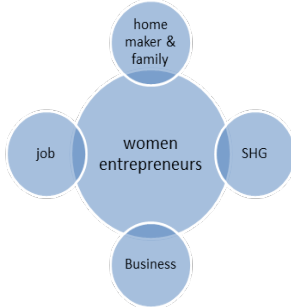
Data Collection

Data is gathered through two main sources: primary data and secondary data. Primary data are produced when the research team investigates the specific issue at hand using tools such as questionnaires for women entrepreneurs, telephone surveys, personal interviews, observations, and experiments. On the other hand, secondary data encompass information that was previously collected for other research purposes but is relevant to the current study being conducted. In this particular research, the focus is on a sample of over 100 tribal women entrepreneurs, with a subset of 70 women entrepreneurs selected as the sampled respondents from Kalahandi district in Odisha.

Role and Play of Tribal Women's Entrepreneurs in Kalahandi District of Odisha

In Kalahandi district of Odisha, tribal women's entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in driving economic empowerment and societal transformation. Through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), these women not only foster solidarity but also harness collective strength to initiate various entrepreneurial ventures. Despite primarily being homemakers, they actively engage in diverse business activities, ranging from handicrafts and handloom weaving to agriculture and livestock rearing. These ventures not only provide a source of income but also empower them with decision-making abilities and leadership skills within their communities. Moreover, by participating in both business and job opportunities, these women contribute significantly to the local economy while challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Their entrepreneurial spirit not only fosters economic growth but also inspires a new generation of tribal women to pursue their aspirations fearlessly.



Agewise Distribution of Tribal Women’s Entrepreneurs

The age at which individuals embark on a business venture holds significance. Numerous accomplished entrepreneurs initiated their careers during their youth, gradually accumulating valuable experience. Conversely, some individuals commence their entrepreneurial endeavors later in life, after amassing a substantial savings pool for investment.

The table 1 below represents the number of Tribal Women Entrepreneurs in Bhawanipatna Block of Kalahandi District of Odisha. It shows a total response of 70 women entrepreneurs. It has been observed that most women entrepreneurs come under the age group of 31-40 years. However, the women in Bhawanipatna block of Kalahandi district have an interest towards entrepreneurship since their teen age.

Table 1 Representing Number of Tribal Women Entrepreneurs in Bhawanipatna Block of Kalahandi District of Odisha

Age group	Age in years	No. of tribal women entrepreneurs	Percentage
1	15-20	2	2.85%
2	21-25	10	14.28%
3	26-30	12	17.14%
4	31-35	14	20%
5	36-40	14	20%
6	41-45	8	11.43%
7	46-50	4	5.72%
8	50-above	6	8.57%

Tribal Women and Rural Economic Development in Kalahandi District of Odisha

Tribal Women and Rural Economic Development The Indian constitution not only guarantees gender equality but also authorizes the government to implement affirmative action measures specifically aimed at addressing the accumulated socio-economic, educational, and political disadvantages experienced by women. In order to uphold this constitutional mandate, state has enacted several legislative initiatives designed to ensure equal rights and combat social discrimination. Various forms of violence and acts of cruelty need to be addressed, along with providing support for employed women. In India, there are approximately 16 distinct laws designed to safeguard & advance women’s interests.

In many developing countries, women are generally expected to engage in employment only when it is necessary to support their families. The less affluent the family, the more it relies on the income generated by women. It is essential to focus on expanding employment opportunities, especially for impoverished women. When women gain improved access to resources, education, and technology, they can either create their own employment opportunities or enhance the productivity and profitability of their existing jobs. This, in turn, will lead to greater involvement of women in the nation’s economic growth. Consequently, initiatives to foster entrepreneurship among women are of utmost importance because, even if they are implemented on a limited scale, they will undoubtedly enhance the social status of women.

Problems of Women Entrepreneurs in Kalahandi Tribal Regions of Odisha

Women-owned businesses are experiencing significant growth in economies worldwide. The latent entrepreneurial potential of women has been steadily transforming, reflecting an increasing awareness of women’s roles and economic contributions in society. However, in India, despite women comprising a substantial portion of the total population, the entrepreneurial landscape remains predominantly male-dominated. In contrast, women in developed countries are well-recognized and hold prominent positions in the business world.

Western Odisha, women entrepreneurs in Kalahandi district of Odisha, encounter substantial obstacles across various domains, including social and personal challenges, marketing difficulties, financial constraints, and production issues. Additionally, tribal women entrepreneurs face exacerbated challenges due to changing times. These additional hurdles encompass a lack of knowledge and experience, inadequate transportation infrastructure, liquidity and financial issues, limited educational opportunities, risk aversion, a lack of self-confidence, family commitments, and financial constraints, among others.

Table 2 Problems of Women Entrepreneurs in Bhawanipatna Block of Kalahandi District

Problem of women Entrepreneurship	Percentage
Financial problem of entrepreneurship	85.8
Lack of experience	70.2
Lack of information	67.4
Transportation	63.7
Risk bearing capacity	79.5
Lack of education	75.1
Shyness	56
Lack of motivation	63
Social barriers	80.9
Lack of opportunities	77.2

Prospects and Schemes of Women Entrepreneurs in Kalahandi Tribal Regions of Odisha

The question of what type of business to establish can be quite perplexing for many aspiring entrepreneurs. In some cases, it can even lead to a state of inactivity. To give shape to their entrepreneurial aspirations, it is crucial to identify one or multiple project ideas. The quest for ideas represents the initial step, a starting point, in the journey toward entrepreneurship.

The success of a new venture hinges on the bedrock of viable business opportunities and how the entrepreneur responds to them. If the foundation is not properly established and remains weak, the structure may eventually crumble or require significant repairs and support efforts. Therefore, the time and effort invested in laying a solid foundation, such as selecting the right business opportunity, can yield substantial benefits in the long run.

In the kalahandi district of Odisha, there are opportunities for women to initiate businesses within tribal regions, thereby fostering socio-economic development within these tribal areas.

Table 3 Business Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs

The processing and branding of forest-derived products
Fishing operations and their marketing
Production of Ayurvedic medicines
Refrigeration and processing of fruits and vegetables
Crafting bamboo items
Utilizing bamboo for medicinal purposes
Cultivating mushrooms
Crafting leaf-based plates and cups
Establishing flower markets, and so on
Establishing fishing markets, and so forth

Suggestion and Conclusion

This analysis leads to the conclusion that despite the state's official support for tribal women, the assistance provided remains grossly insufficient to meet the needs of the tribal community. In this research, a sample of 70 tribal women entrepreneurs from Kalahandi district in Odisha was examined. Following an in-depth analysis of the data, it became evident that these selected tribal women entrepreneurs face a multitude of challenges. Training, guidance, or consulting services tailored exclusively or particularly for female entrepreneurs, initiatives for the initiation of businesses by women, particularly those re-entering the workforce, special emphasis on the inclusion of women in mainstream campaigns to bolster entrepreneurship levels could be motivating the women entrepreneurs to focus on their interest and contribute to the economy. Policies promoting equal opportunities, striving for equitable access to services for women. Collaborative efforts with various organizations to foster entrepreneurship and facilitate access. Promoting and providing support for pertinent business assistance initiatives. However, it has also been demonstrated that they possess substantial potential to engage in innovative endeavours, requiring only a modest amount of capital, provided they receive strong support from both the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Furthermore, the research

has also proposed potential solutions to these issues, tailored to the specific needs and constraints of the selected population, while considering the limitations of available resources.

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