

Indigenous Entrepreneurship among Tribal Women in Mayurbhanj District: An In-Depth Study"

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurship refers to the process by which women initiate and manage businesses for economic development, involving the mobilization of resources, undertaking of risks, overcoming of challenges, generating of employment, and managing enterprises for the benefit of both themselves and others. In this context, the role of Santal women is substantial and crucial—not only for their families but also for the wider community. Santal women, who constitute about half of the total population of the Santal community, are considered central figures in their society due to their hard work and significant contributions to the family economy and overall household management.

The research aims to understand the socio-economic profile of these women, their types of business ventures, and the various barriers they face in sustaining and scaling their enterprises. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, the study involved 100 respondents selected through stratified random sampling, and data were collected via structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. Findings indicate that while a significant number of tribal women are engaged in income-generating activities such as non-timber forest product collection, tailoring, and small-scale trading, they continue to face constraints like heavy market competition, financial limitations, lack of transportation, and limited access to information. Despite these challenges, the study also highlights the positive role of education, emerging family support, and a growing sense of economic independence among the women. The research concludes with recommendations for enhancing indigenous entrepreneurship through skill development, financial inclusion, and stronger market linkages to promote sustainable livelihoods and social empowerment among tribal women in Mayurbhanj.

Keywords: Tribal women, Entrepreneurship development, Mayurbhanj district, Odisha, Socio-economic empowerment.

Introduction

Indigenous entrepreneurship among tribal women is increasingly being recognized as a vital driver of socio-economic development, particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions like Mayurbhanj district in Odisha. Home to a significant tribal population, Mayurbhanj is rich in natural resources, traditional knowledge, and cultural heritage—elements that form the foundation for various indigenous enterprises. Tribal women, in particular, have been at the forefront of utilizing these resources through small-scale ventures such as non-timber forest product collection, traditional crafts, tailoring, and local trading. However, despite their growing participation in entrepreneurial activities, these women often operate in challenging environments marked by limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural constraints. This study seeks to explore the nature and extent of indigenous entrepreneurship among tribal women in Mayurbhanj, examine the factors influencing their entrepreneurial journey, and identify the key barriers they encounter. By understanding these dynamics, the study aims to contribute to the formulation of more inclusive policies and interventions that can empower tribal women economically and socially.

Review of Literature

Lalitha Shivakumar (1995): Pointed out that the small savings by rural women can generate the requisite resources which can wean the people away from the exploitation of money lenders savings depend on habits and voluntary savings constitute the key for economic progress. It has also been proved that the poor people can save substantially through group efforts.

Promotions of Self-Help Groups have the potential to bring women into the mainstream of economic development paving the way for sustainable development.

Karl (1995): Studied the role of SHGs of women on decision-making and concluded empowerment as a multifaceted process, involving the pooling of resources to achieve collective strength and countervailing power and entailing the improvement of manual and technical skills, administrative, managerial and planning capacities and analytical reflective abilities of local women.

Gurumoorthy (2000): pointed out that women's participation play significant role in rural employment activities. The self-help would concentrate on all round development of the beneficiaries and their village as a whole. The groups would undertake the responsibility of delivering non-credit service such as literacy, health and environmental issues. The concept of Self-Help Group would mould women as responsible citizens of the country for achieving social and economic status. It has also proved that it would bring on the mindset of the conservative and tradition bound illiterate women in rural areas.

Vijay Kulkarni (2000) has described in his article "Empowerment of Women through Self-Help Groups" the difference between women who have become part of SHGs and those who are not members of the SHGs from the same village. Empowerment has taken place across caste/class. It has also helped to some extent to go beyond caste politics and to bring them together as women.

Research gap

- Lack of localized studies on indigenous entrepreneurial activities specific to tribal women in Mayurbhanj district.
- Limited understanding of socio-cultural factors affecting tribal women's participation in entrepreneurship.
- Insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of government and NGO support programs on indigenous women-led enterprises.

Objective of the study

1. To examine the socio-economic factors influencing the participation of tribal women in indigenous entrepreneurship.
2. To assess the impact of indigenous entrepreneurship on the economic empowerment and social status of tribal women.

Hypotheses of the study

H1: Tribal women engaged in indigenous entrepreneurship have a significantly higher level of economic independence compared to those who are not engaged.

H2: Support from government and non-governmental programs significantly influence the **Why:** You're examining the effect of support (independent variable) on enterprise success (dependent variable).

Methodology:

The study on Indigenous Entrepreneurship among Tribal Women in Mayurbhanj District will adopt a descriptive and analytical research design to explore the entrepreneurial activities of tribal women, the socio-economic factors influencing their participation, and the impacts of such entrepreneurship on their economic and social status. Stratified random sampling will be used to select tribal women engaged in various indigenous entrepreneurial activities across different regions. Data will be collected through structured interviews and questionnaires, focusing on the types of businesses, socio-economic backgrounds, and support received from government and NGO programs. In addition, focus group discussions will provide deeper insights into the socio-cultural barriers and challenges faced. The study will employ quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics, Chi-Square tests, t-tests, and regression analysis, to test hypotheses related to education, economic independence, and the impact of support programs.

Data Analysis and interpretation

Table-1: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondent's age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 25	15	15
25-50	45	45
50-75	30	30

Above 60	10	10
Total	100	100

The table provides a distribution of participants based on their age groups. Among the total 100 participants, the largest group falls within the **25-50 years age range**, comprising 45% of the sample. The second largest group is in the **50-75 years** category, representing 30% of the participants. The **less than 25 years** age group accounts for 15% of the sample, while the **above 60 years** group makes up 10%.

Table-2: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondent's educational status

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	15	15
BSE	13	13
CHSE	27	27
Graduation	45	45
Total	100	100

The table presents the distribution of participants based on their educational level. Among the total 100 participants, **45%** have completed graduation, making this the largest group in terms of educational attainment. The second-largest group is those with a CHSE (Higher Secondary Education), accounting for **27%** of the participants. **13%** of the participants have completed BSE (Basic Secondary Education), while **15%** of participants have no formal education.

Table-3 :Frequency and percentage distribution of respondent's occupation

Occupational Break	Frequency	Percentage
Non-timber forest product	35	35
Tailoring	30	30
Grocery shop	30	30
Tractor hiring	5	5
Total	100	100

Table-4: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondent's monthly income

Monthly income before joining	Frequency	Percentage
6000-8000	30	30
8000-10000	25	25
10000-12000	20	20
Above 12000	5	5
Total	100	100

The table presents the distribution of participants based on their **monthly income before joining** entrepreneurship activities. Among the total 100 participants, **30%** reported a monthly income in the range of **6000-8000**, making it the largest group. The second-largest group is those with a monthly income between **8000-10000**, accounting for **25%** of the participants. **20%** of participants reported earning **10000-12000**, while only **5%** had a monthly income exceeding **12000**.

Table-5: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondent's Marketing Problem

Type of problem	Frequency	Percentage
Heavy competition	48	48
Transportation	33	33
High credit sales	15	15
Storage problem	14	15
Total	100	100

The table illustrates the distribution of participants based on the **types of problems** they face in their entrepreneurial activities. The most common issue reported is **heavy competition**, with **48%** of participants indicating this as a major problem. The second most frequent issue is **transportation**, affecting **33%** of the participants. **15%** of participants cited **high credit sales** as a challenge, while an equal percentage of **15%** also reported **storage problems**.

Table-6: Frequency and percentage distribution of respondent's Entrepreneurs problem

Type of problem	Frequency	Percentage
Financial issues	30	30
Lack of information	15	15
Support from Family	10	10
Trading	45	45
Total	100	100

The table presents the distribution of participants based on the **types of problems** they encounter in their entrepreneurial activities. The most commonly reported problem is **trading**, with **45%** of participants citing it as a challenge. **30%** of the participants face **financial issues**, making it the second most frequent problem. **15%** experience a **lack of information**, while **10%** face challenges related to **support from family**.

Table-7: Independent sample t-test between socio-economic independence and indigenous entrepreneurship

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
socio-economic independence	47.00	3.73	30.15	.000
indigenous entrepreneurship	31.67	3.44		

The independent sample t-test was conducted to examine the difference in mean scores between socio-economic independence and indigenous entrepreneurship. The results show a significant difference between the two variables, with **socio-economic independence** having a higher **mean (47.00)** compared to **indigenous entrepreneurship (31.67)**. The **t-value** of **30.15** and the associated **p-value of .000** (less than 0.05) indicate that the difference in means is statistically significant. This suggests that there is a strong association between engaging in indigenous entrepreneurship and achieving higher socio-economic independence among tribal women in Mayurbhanj district.

Table-8: Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.377	.142	.134	3.47775

a. Predictors: (Constant), entrepreneurship

The regression model summary indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between entrepreneurship and the dependent variable, as reflected by the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.377. The R Square value of 0.142 suggests that entrepreneurship accounts for approximately 14.2% of the variance in the dependent variable, indicating a modest explanatory power. The Adjusted R Square, which adjusts for the number of predictors, is slightly lower at 0.134, reaffirming that while the model has some predictive strength, it is not very strong. The Standard Error of the Estimate is 3.47775, showing the average deviation of observed values from the predicted values. Overall, the model suggests that entrepreneurship has a meaningful, though limited, impact on the outcome being studied.

Table-9: Anova table

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	196.717	1	196.717	16.265	.000 ^b
	Residual	1185.283	98	12.095		
	Total	1382.000	99			

a. Dependent Variable: socioeconomic

b. Predictors: (Constant), entrepreneurship

The ANOVA table evaluates the significance of the regression model where **entrepreneurship** is used to predict **socioeconomic status**. The **F-value** of **16.265** indicates that the model is statistically significant, as the **p-value (Sig.)** is **.000**, which is less than 0.05. This implies that there is a significant linear relationship between entrepreneurship and socioeconomic status. The **regression sum of squares (196.717)** represents the variation explained by the model, while the **residual sum of squares (1185.283)** represents the unexplained variation. Given the results, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship significantly contributes to predicting or explaining changes in the socioeconomic status of the respondents.

Table-10: Impact of Entrepreneurship on Socioeconomic Status

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	34.048	3.230		10.540	.000
	entrepreneurship	.409	.101	.377	4.033	.000

a. Dependent Variable: socioeconomic

The coefficients table illustrates the effect of entrepreneurship on socioeconomic status. The **unstandardized coefficient (B)** for entrepreneurship is **0.409**, indicating that for every one-unit increase in entrepreneurship, the socioeconomic status of the respondent increases by 0.409 units, holding other factors constant. The **standardized coefficient (Beta)** value is **0.377**, suggesting a moderate positive influence. The **t-value** of **4.033** and the **p-value** of **.000** indicate that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The **constant value (intercept)** is **34.048**, meaning that when entrepreneurship is zero, the expected socioeconomic status score is 34.048. Overall, the analysis confirms that entrepreneurship significantly and positively impacts the socioeconomic status of tribal women in Mayurbhanj district.

Major Findings of the study

- In terms of age, the majority of respondents (45%) fall within the 25–50 years age group, indicating that most tribal women entrepreneurs are in their economically active years, while the least represented group is those above 60 years (10%), possibly due to age-related limitations.
- Educationally, 45% of the women are graduates, suggesting a relatively high level of education among the participants, whereas only 13% have completed basic secondary education (BSE), highlighting a gap at that level.
- Occupationally, non-timber forest product collection is the most common activity (35%), reflecting the community's reliance on forest-based livelihoods, while tractor hiring is the least common (5%), likely due to the capital required.
- Regarding income, most women earned between ₹6000–8000 monthly before joining entrepreneurship (30%), with only 5% earning above ₹12000, pointing to modest financial backgrounds.
- In marketing problems, heavy competition is the major challenge (48%), whereas storage issues are the least reported (14%). Similarly, in entrepreneurial problems, trading-related difficulties top the list (45%), while only 10% cited lack of family support.
- The independent sample t-test shows a statistically significant difference between socio-economic independence and indigenous entrepreneurship, with a **t-value of 30.15** and a **p-value of .000**. This indicates that socio-economic independence levels are considerably higher than indigenous entrepreneurship scores.
- The mean score for socio-economic independence (**47.00**) is notably higher than that of indigenous entrepreneurship (**31.67**), suggesting that women involved in entrepreneurial activities may perceive or achieve higher levels of socio-economic autonomy.

- The regression model shows a **moderate positive correlation ($R = 0.377$)** between entrepreneurship and socioeconomic status, indicating a direct and meaningful relationship between the two variables.
- The **R Square value of 0.142** implies that indigenous entrepreneurship explains about **14.2% of the variance** in socio-economic status, reflecting a moderate but statistically relevant level of influence.
- The ANOVA results show a **significant F-value of 16.265** with a **p-value of .000**, confirming that the regression model is statistically valid and that entrepreneurship significantly contributes to predicting socio-economic outcomes.
- Out of the **total sum of squares (1382.000)**, **196.717 is explained** by the regression model, indicating the portion of variance in socio-economic status attributable to entrepreneurship.
- The **standard error of the estimate** is relatively low, suggesting that the predicted values of socio-economic status from the model are reasonably close to the actual values, strengthening the reliability of the regression analysis.

CONCLUSION

The study on Indigenous Entrepreneurship among Tribal Women in Mayurbhanj District reveals that tribal women are actively engaging in various entrepreneurial ventures, particularly in areas such as non-timber forest products, tailoring, and small-scale trading. These activities have played a pivotal role in enhancing their socio-economic independence. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between indigenous entrepreneurship and improved socio-economic status, as demonstrated through statistical tests including t-tests and regression analysis. Despite facing challenges like market competition, limited financial resources, and infrastructural constraints, these women have shown resilience and innovation in sustaining their livelihoods. The study underscores the need for focused support in terms of financial inclusion, training, and institutional backing to further empower tribal women entrepreneurs. Overall, indigenous entrepreneurship is proving to be a key pathway for socio-economic transformation and empowerment in the tribal communities of Mayurbhanj.

Recommendations

- Regular training programs should be organized to enhance entrepreneurial, financial, and marketing skills among tribal women. Tailored modules focusing on indigenous crafts, product innovation, and digital literacy will help improve productivity and competitiveness.
- Government and NGOs should ensure easier access to microcredit, low-interest loans, and financial literacy support to help women entrepreneurs start and expand their businesses without falling into debt traps.
- Establishing cooperative societies, local marketplaces, and digital platforms for tribal products can help overcome challenges related to trading and competition. Assistance in branding and packaging of indigenous products can also enhance market value and reach.

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