

Tribal Women Entrepreneurship and Development Challenges in Korba District of Chhattisgarh

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship among tribal women has emerged as a significant pathway for socio-economic transformation, particularly in resource-rich yet underdeveloped regions like Korba district of Chhattisgarh. This study explores the nature, characteristics, and challenges of tribal women entrepreneurship in the district. It aims to analyze the socio-economic profile of tribal women entrepreneurs, identify the major constraints faced by them, and evaluate their role in local development. The study is based on primary data collected from 250 tribal women entrepreneurs through structured interviews. The findings reveal that most women are engaged in small-scale, traditional, and semi-modern enterprises such as self-help groups, forest-based activities, petty trade, and agriculture-related businesses. Despite their contribution to household income and community development, these women face multiple challenges including lack of education and training, inadequate financial resources, poor market access, and socio-cultural constraints. The study concludes that while tribal women entrepreneurship holds great potential for sustainable development, targeted policy interventions, capacity-building initiatives, and institutional support are essential to enhance their economic participation and empowerment.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, traditional, and semi-modern enterprises.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in economic development by generating employment, promoting innovation, and improving living standards. In rural and tribal regions, entrepreneurship becomes even more significant as it provides opportunities for income generation and self-reliance. Tribal women, in particular, represent a vital yet underutilized

segment of the entrepreneurial workforce. Korba district, located in the state of Chhattisgarh, is characterized by a substantial tribal population, rich natural resources, and a dual economy consisting of industrial and rural sectors. Despite the presence of coal mines and power plants, a large section of the tribal population remains economically disadvantaged and dependent on traditional livelihoods.

In recent years, tribal women have increasingly participated in entrepreneurial activities as a means of improving their socio-economic status. These activities often combine traditional knowledge with modern business practices. However, the path of entrepreneurship for tribal women is not without challenges. They encounter barriers related to education, finance, market access, and social norms. This study focuses on understanding the dynamics of tribal women entrepreneurship in Korba district and assessing the challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To analyze the socio-demographic profile of tribal women entrepreneurs in Korba district
2. To examine the types of enterprises undertaken by tribal women
3. To identify the major challenges faced by tribal women entrepreneurs
4. To assess the role of entrepreneurship in improving their socio-economic status
5. To suggest measures for promoting sustainable tribal women entrepreneurship

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Study Area

The study is conducted in Korba district of Chhattisgarh, which has a significant concentration of tribal communities such as Gond, Korwa, and Binjwar. The district is marked by a mix of industrial development and rural backwardness.

3.2 Nature of Data

The study is based on primary data, supplemented by secondary sources.

3.3 Sample Size

A total of 250 tribal women entrepreneurs were selected using purposive sampling techniques.

3.4 Data Collection

Data was collected through:

Structured questionnaires

Face-to-face interviews

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using:

Descriptive statistics

Percentage analysis

Tabular presentation

4. Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

The analysis of demographic characteristics reveals important insights into the background of tribal women entrepreneurs.

4.1 Age Distribution

Most respondents belong to the age group of 30–35 years, indicating that entrepreneurship is more common among economically active age groups.

4.2 Educational Status

A large proportion of respondents have education below the high school level. Only a small percentage have completed higher education, reflecting limited access to educational opportunities.

4.3 Marital Status

The majority of respondents are married, which indicates that women often balance entrepreneurial activities with family responsibilities.

4.4 Income Levels

Most respondents fall within the low to middle-income categories, with monthly incomes ranging between ₹1000 and ₹20000.

5. Types of Enterprises

Tribal women in Korba district are engaged in diverse economic activities. These include:

Self-help group-based enterprises

Grocery shops and petty trade

Animal husbandry

Forest-based activities (collection and sale of minor forest produce)

Handicrafts and traditional art

Small-scale food processing and bakery

These enterprises are generally small in scale and rely heavily on local resources and traditional knowledge. However, some women are gradually adopting modern business practices.

6. Role of Entrepreneurship in Tribal Development

Entrepreneurship has contributed significantly to the socio-economic development of tribal women in the following ways:

6.1 Economic Empowerment

Entrepreneurial activities provide additional income, reducing dependence on traditional livelihoods and improving household financial stability.

6.2 Social Empowerment

Women entrepreneurs gain confidence, decision-making power, and social recognition within their communities.

6.3 Employment Generation

Small enterprises create employment opportunities for other members of the community, especially women.

6.4 Preservation of Traditional Knowledge

Many enterprises are based on traditional skills such as handicrafts and forest produce, helping preserve cultural heritage.

7. Challenges Faced by Tribal Women Entrepreneurs

Despite their contributions, tribal women entrepreneurs face several challenges:

7.1 Family Responsibilities

Balancing business activities with household duties is a major challenge. Social expectations often limit the time and energy women can devote to their enterprises.

7.2 Lack of Education and Training

Limited educational attainment restricts their ability to manage businesses effectively. Lack of technical and managerial training further hinders growth.

7.3 Financial Constraints

Access to credit and financial resources is limited. Many women rely on informal sources of finance, which are often inadequate.

7.4 Poor Market Access

Tribal women face difficulties in accessing markets due to:

Lack of transportation

Limited market information

Poor networking

7.5 Lack of Institutional Support

Although government schemes exist, awareness and accessibility remain low. Many women are unable to benefit from these programmes.

7.6 Labour Shortage

Shortage of skilled and unskilled labour affects production and expansion of enterprises.

7.7 High Cost of Production

Rising costs of raw materials and transportation reduce profit margins and discourage business expansion.

7.8 Socio-Cultural Barriers

Traditional norms and gender roles often restrict women's mobility and participation in economic activities.

8. Discussion

The study highlights that tribal women entrepreneurship in Korba district is still in a developing stage. While women are actively engaged in income-generating activities, their enterprises are mostly small-scale and informal. The challenges faced by these women are interconnected. For example, lack of education affects access to finance and markets, while socio-cultural barriers limit their participation in training programmes. These factors collectively hinder the growth and sustainability of their enterprises.

Government initiatives such as self-help groups and skill development programmes have had a positive impact, but their reach and effectiveness need to be enhanced. A more integrated approach is required to address the multiple dimensions of tribal women entrepreneurship.

9. Conclusion

Tribal women entrepreneurship in Korba district represents a promising avenue for socio-economic development. It contributes to income generation, empowerment, and community development. However, the potential of tribal women entrepreneurs remains underutilized due to various structural and institutional challenges.

The study concludes that:

Tribal women entrepreneurs play a vital role in local economies

Their enterprises are constrained by multiple socio-economic factors

There is a need for targeted interventions to support their growth

10. Recommendations

To promote tribal women entrepreneurship, the following measures are suggested:

1. Skill Development Programmes: Provide training in business management, marketing, and technology

2. Access to Finance: Improve access to credit through banks and microfinance institutions

3. Market Linkages: Develop better marketing channels and infrastructure
4. Awareness Programmes: Increase awareness about government schemes
5. Institutional Support: Strengthen support systems such as self-help groups
6. Infrastructure Development: Improve transportation and communication facilities

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