

Entrepreneurship as a Catalyst for Women's Empowerment: A Case Study on the Tribal Women in Harichandanpur Block, Odisha

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship plays an important role for women's empowerment through improving finance, decisional authority, and social mobility. This study was based on finding out the effectiveness of entrepreneurship with respect to women's empowerment particularly among tribal females of Harichandanpur Block in Odisha. Through conducting a qualitative thematic analysis approach the research assesses the influence that institutional support self-efficacy, and socioeconomic factors have toward the entrepreneurial intents and success by tribal women. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with tribal women who were involved in micro and small enterprises. The results indicate that entrepreneurship offers economic stability and a sense of self-reliance, but the problems are that they have limited access to financial resources, inadequate market linkages, and socio-cultural constraints. The study further calls for the necessity of focused policy interventions, skill development programs, and improvement in access to institutional support towards improving the tribal women's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Such insights contribute toward deepening an understanding of entrepreneurship as a driver

for sustainable empowerment of marginalized communities.

Keywords: *Women's Empowerment, tribal women, entrepreneurship, institutional support, self-efficacy, Odisha*

1. INTRODUCTION

Socioeconomic growth is significantly influenced by women's empowerment, especially in rural areas and tribal communities where traditional gender roles often restrict access to education, employment, and financial resources. Entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful tool for social and economic empowerment, particularly for marginalized communities, including tribal women. It plays a pivotal role in fostering self-reliance, improving socio-economic conditions, and enhancing decision-making capabilities among women (Ahl & Nelson, 2015). Entrepreneurship has emerged as an effective means of fostering empowerment by enabling women to achieve financial independence, enhance their decision-making power, and contribute to local economies (Kabeer, 1999). However, entrepreneurship has provided a pathway for tribal women to overcome these barriers and achieve financial independence. Tribal women entrepreneurs have benefited greatly from the several programs and initiatives the

Indian government has started to support women entrepreneurs, including the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and the Stand-Up India Scheme (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021). The purpose of this study is to investigate how entrepreneurship may empower tribal women in Odisha's Harichandanpur Block. It looks at the chances and difficulties these women encounter as well as how their socioeconomic standing is affected by their entrepreneurial endeavours. This study aims to add to the larger conversation on women's empowerment and sustainable development in tribal communities by examining the case of tribal women entrepreneurs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Entrepreneurship and Empowerment of Tribal Women

The economist Joseph Schumpeter provided a broader definition in 1942 (Gill and Ganesh 2007), according to which an entrepreneur is anybody who launches a new company, finds a chance, and creates a company to go after it. An entrepreneur, according to Nkechi et al. (2012), is someone who performs the duties of an entrepreneur, possesses creative and inventive abilities, recognizes difficulties, and acts to identify an appropriate solution. As Verheul et al. (2002) point out, women's participation in entrepreneurship not only increases economic system diversity but also serves as an effective way to unleash the potential of the female workforce. According to Brush (1992), women entrepreneurs are capable of taking on a wide range of risks, seeing business possibilities, and providing services to clients or communities. Additionally, women entrepreneurs ensure their economic independence through their entrepreneurial endeavours, which subsequently gives them a sense of empowerment (Datta and Gailey 2012). Women must be empowered because their ideas and values contribute to the creation of wholesome families, a healthier society, and therefore a strong nation (Khan, 2015). It refers to raising awareness and upgrading the abilities of women so that more people can

take part in decision-making and are more in control of actions for transformation (Jaya & Binod, 2013). Unfortunately, it wasn't until the last several centuries that they were given the same respect as males. As commerce increased throughout the ages, women began to study the fundamentals of business and obtained formal entrepreneurial training for their ventures (Mantok 2016).

2.2. Factors Determining Tribal Women's Entrepreneurial Intentions

Intention is a type of human behaviour (Singh and Onahring, 2019) Yet, measuring intentions is now an area of study in regards to the entrepreneurial mindset. Historically, multiple elements were generally regarded as impediments to the commencement and expansion of entrepreneurial undertakings. Lack of financial resources, raw materials, skilled labour and other factors contributed to this. These factors were raw materials, intermediates, technical manpower, finance, and other resources. Entrepreneurial Intention, on the other hand, has become an important factor with the emergence of several provisions from relevant authorities. Thus, entrepreneurial intentions are defined as the potential to begin a new business i.e. self-employed. A focus on entrepreneurial intentions, viewed as personal orientations that lead individuals to create ventures, represents another perspective. The entrepreneurial intention (EI) is an essential characteristic as it influences entrepreneurship development and leads to the entrepreneurial expansion. According to Aliyu et al. (2015), EI promotes self-determination and encourages proactivity. As stated by Bird (1988), the entrepreneurial intention can be defined as the psychological state of entrepreneurs, resulting in focusing in experiences and performing actions. This mentality informs their approach towards a business concept; the early stage to be established and the division of their respective organizations. Prabha Devi et al. (2019) and Tlaiss (2015) examined key factors that encouraged the entrepreneurial attitude of women entrepreneurship in India.

Their results reflected that government policies and entrepreneurship skills training were prime motivators toward entrepreneurship for the women. Entrepreneurial training and similar programs significantly improved female EI as well as the psychological traits of the participants. Psychological factors including self-confidence, tolerance for ambiguity, retention of training, innovativeness, and achievement motivation were also seen to positively impact EI.

2.3. Challenges faced by tribal women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs in a remote area often find themselves without the means or the opportunities to share their experiences and to participate in collective learning. Social media might be able to help. Ghouse et al. (2017) highlight this in their paper when they say that "social media has the potential for women's mutual support and for providing consultancy, which could be a way of 'doing development' in a context where platforms and networking opportunities are few." Afroze et al. (2015) claim that women entrepreneurs face challenges due to a lack of training, experience, and marketing skills. According to Mark et al. (2006), women's creativity and skill are tightly related. Without access to networks, women lose out on opportunities to interact with successful companies that may act as role models. Often, women have fewer professional contacts, less bargaining power, and less understanding of navigating government legislation, which hinders the growth of the commercial sector (Mahbub, 2000).

Bhagabata Behera (2017) asserts that women entrepreneurs in tribal communities face several challenges. These difficulties include the following: Tribal women are often unmotivated to engage in non-traditional economic endeavours. Their development of critical abilities and their participation in independent entrepreneurial endeavours are both impacted by this lack of desire. There's often a strong resistance by tribal women to move away from traditional mindsets.

- They continue to concentrate on farming and allied occupations and possess a limited awareness of time management. Their time is split between serious, often occupied, mental labour related to their farming or related family businesses and household duties that keep them busy and ensure their family's wellbeing.
- Access to education is limited, and that restricts them to agriculture and allied sectors, thereby diminishing their prospects for much-needed job diversification and income growth.
- Advancing in entrepreneurship often requires tribal women to be accountable to both their peers and the larger village community.
- Tribal women's entrepreneurial growth is hampered by their limited exposure to the commercial world.
- Tribal communities' limited mobility severely restricts women's access to a variety of economic opportunities.
- Among the many hazards that tribal women entrepreneurs must deal with are social and technological obstacles.
- Tribal women must frequently answer to both their peers and the greater village community in order to advance in business.
- Lack of loan availability is a significant barrier that erodes the financial base required for business endeavours.
- Low awareness of available credit programs.
- Limited knowledge of fundamental marketing concepts.
- Lack of assets to serve as collateral for securing loans.
- Insufficient financial literacy.

Although women entrepreneurs have made important contributions, a number of obstacles have been identified as limiting their impact. These obstacles include several causes, such as government regulations, restricted availability of financial resources, assets, information technology, and essential infrastructure, all of which are critical for their effectiveness and business growth

(United Nations, 2006). Additionally, Mayoux (2001) found particular variables that restrict the ability of female entrepreneurs to capitalize on possibilities in their surroundings, which contributes to the reasons why their businesses fail (Kantor, 1999). As Kantor (1999) rightly pointed out, women frequently encounter more barriers to their economic endeavours than males do. Mayoux (2001) and the United Nations (2006) itemizes these factors into many of the problems experienced such as poor financial management, liquidity challenges, managerial incompetency or lack of experience, inadequate or non-existent records or books, difficulty with sales and marketing, staffing challenges and issues with unions, ignoring professional regulations limits on financial access, a lack of social and commercial networks, low demand in the local economy, housing tenure beliefs and institutions, a lack of job experience and skills, and a lack of leaders. Further obstacles to the development of female's entrepreneurs include cultural barriers, low motivation, high crime rates, and difficulties in moving away from government benefits and employment. Women entrepreneurs were separated into two categories by Gould and Perzen (1990): "better-off" and "low-income" women. The obstacles that "better-off" women must overcome include a lack of exposure to entrepreneurial ideas in their homes, schools, and communities; exclusion from well-established business networks; limited access to financial capital; prejudice from prominent figures in the industry; and battles against gender stereotypes that depict female entrepreneurs as hobbyists rather than significant business owners. Additionally, societal ambivalence toward competition and profit, low self-confidence, and barriers to entering the global market—where men continue to dominate—further limit their entrepreneurial success.

2.4. Support systems for tribal women entrepreneurs

Women running businesses are important to the government because they help their nations create jobs and lower unemployment rates (Welsh et al., 2014). Government support is really seen as crucial due to the many issues that female entrepreneurs encounter (Leitch et al., 2018). Scholars stress the value of training programs to provide female entrepreneurs with the skills they need (Itani et al., 2011) and legal counsel (Baughn et al., 2006), both of which are areas where government intervention can be highly effective. Tribal women have the potential to achieve remarkable success through their dedicated and skilled participation in entrepreneurial activities. The basic indigenous knowledge, skills, talents, and resources needed to start and manage businesses are possessed by rural women. However, they need access to information about loan opportunities, various funding agencies' procedures, and certification processes as well as being aware of the government welfare programs, motivated by them, with technical know-how, and encouragement from their family, government, and other agencies. Encouragement also needs to be given for promotion and development of networking among rural women entrepreneurs. Such networks may offer lectures and printed materials which provide practical technical knowledge on issues such as production, processing, procurement, management, and marketing. This initiative will encourage other rural women to enter micro-enterprise ventures properly supported so that they enhance their skills, increase family income, and boost national productivity. (Gunajit Sarma (2014), The Government of India's New Industrial Policy places a high priority on women's entrepreneurship growth. According to this strategy, the intended outcomes will not be achieved by simply increasing the distribution of resources among women within the context of the current development pattern. It rather stressed the adoption of an all-round approach towards woman's development, which would be properly combined with an

attempt towards enriching her personality along with betterment in her social and economic conditions. Indian tribal women entrepreneurs, therefore, have a favorable environment to showcase their talents. The government holds the responsibility of advancing women's economic participation and equipping them to take on entrepreneurial roles within industrial estates. However, it is equally important for Indian tribal women to overcome their own limitations, embrace new opportunities, and take on new responsibilities and experiences. Such is the view of Ahl and Nelson (2015), where it is agreed that governments around the world constantly pass legislation and implement policies designed to foster enterprise development and growth. This is because it has come to be realized that creating and sustaining an environment of innovation and entrepreneurship is a vital investment in a country's long-term economic prosperity. However, the majority of policies, programs, and strategies aimed at assisting female entrepreneurs are often assessed based on their efficacy and structure rather than their broader effects on women's status in society, possibilities in life, and advancement toward equality. Financial institutions, NGOs, and government organizations are essential in assisting tribal women entrepreneurs from underprivileged backgrounds who are just starting out in business. These organizations work towards the removal of barriers standing as a hindrance to poorly placed women in starting their entrepreneurial journey by providing both monetary and emotional aid. Through several income-generating initiatives, they engage marginalized women and make them economically independent. Flexible promotional policies serve as a driving force, encouraging and supporting women to seek self-employment for personal and professional advancement. These support institutions are, therefore, highly acclaimed to be the foundation principles that

encourage and drive women entrepreneurs forward for a longer period of time (Agarwal & Lenka, 2016).

3: Objectives of the study

1. To study the role of entrepreneurship in empowering tribal women in Harichandanpur Block.
2. To investigate the elements that influence entrepreneurial intentions among tribal women.
3. To determine the challenges faced by tribal women entrepreneurs and the support systems that facilitate their journey.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research incorporates qualitative analysis via content analysis methodology. Tribal women entrepreneurs in Harichandanpur Block were interviewed in-depth to collect the data. The study focuses on understanding the socio-economic impact, the function of institutional support, and the women's self-efficacy in their entrepreneurial journey.

4.1. Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis of Tribal Women Entrepreneurs in Harichandanpur Block

Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns in qualitative data.

Familiarization with Data

- The dataset includes responses from 18 tribal women entrepreneurs involved in various businesses.
- The data provides insights into opportunities, challenges, and socio-economic impacts.
- Key areas of interest include access to finance, skill development, market challenges, and empowerment.

Initial Coding

Table 1: Categorising responses into smaller meaningful codes based on recurring themes in the data.

Aspect	Example Responses	Initial Codes
Opportunities	Access to training, government schemes, local demand, microfinance	Institutional Support, Market Demand, Skill Development
Challenges	Limited market, high competition, raw material cost, lack of capital	Financial Barriers, Market Limitations, Competition
Socio-Economic Impact	Increased income, better education for children, decision-making power, self-confidence	Economic Empowerment, Social Recognition, Household Improvement

Identifying Themes

After reviewing codes, broader themes emerge that represent key insights from the data.

(1) Institutional Support as a Driver of Entrepreneurship

- Many women benefited from government schemes, skill development programs, and microfinance loans.
- Example: *"Bank loan support helped me start poultry farming"* (Madhuri Bhoi).

(2) Financial Barriers as a Major Constraint

- Lack of access to capital and high raw material costs were commonly cited.
- Example: *"Expensive raw materials make it difficult to earn profit"* (Arati Murmu).

(3) Market Limitations and Competition

- Entrepreneurs in handicrafts, spices, and tribal jewellery faced difficulties in finding buyers and competing with larger businesses.
- Example: *"There is demand, but reaching buyers is difficult due to transport issues"* (Rina Hembram).

(4) Entrepreneurship as a Tool for Economic and Social Empowerment

- Women reported greater household decision-making power, improved financial stability, and social recognition.
- Example: *"Now, I contribute to family income and my opinion matters more"* (Pratima Beshra).

Reviewing and Refining Themes

Key themes are finalized as:

1. Institutional Support as a Growth Enabler
2. Financial and Market Barriers to Sustainability
3. Economic and Social Transformation through Entrepreneurship

4.2. Findings of the Study

Theme 1: Institutional Support as a Growth Enabler

Many women reported that government schemes, bank loans, and skill training played a crucial role in starting their businesses. This institutional support helped them gain entrepreneurial confidence and expand operations.

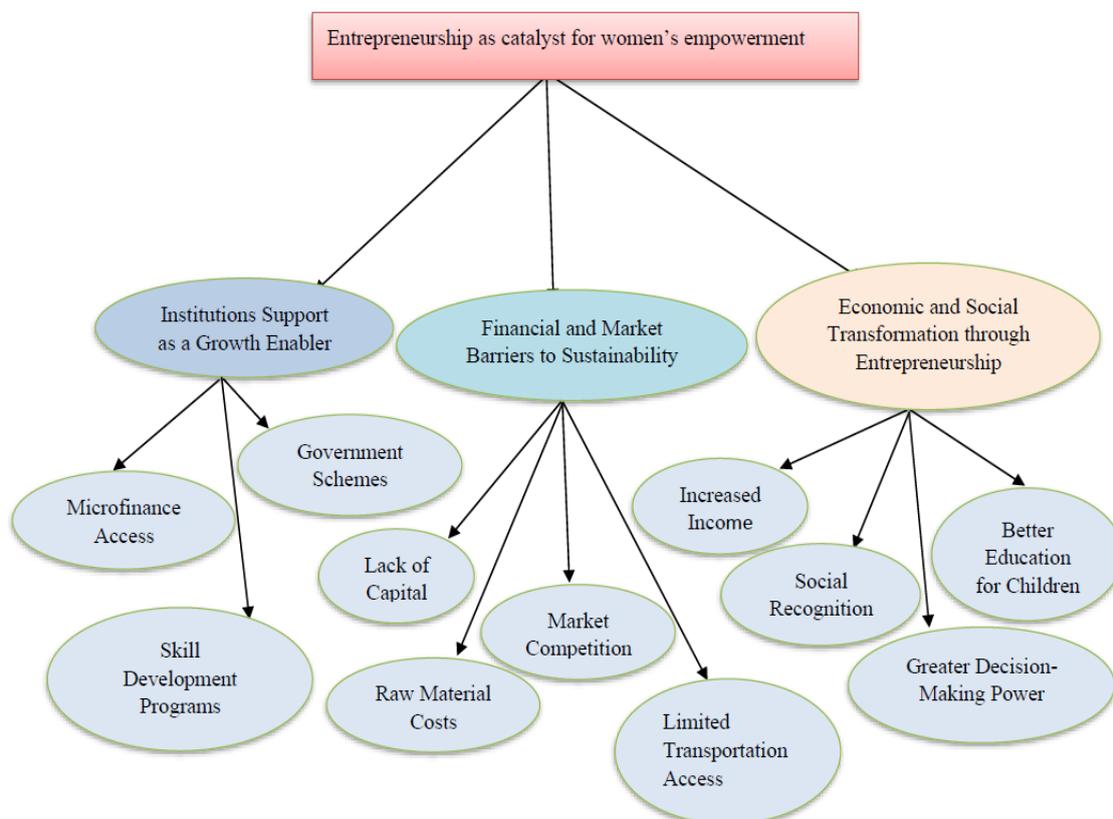
Theme 2: Financial and Market Barriers to Sustainability

While institutional support was available, financial constraints remained a major barrier. Women in handicrafts, bamboo craft, and jewellery making struggled with raw material costs and competition. Limited transportation further restricted access to buyers. Access to credit was still difficult for some, preventing business expansion.

Theme 3: Economic and Social Transformation through Entrepreneurship

Despite challenges, entrepreneurship significantly improved the socio-economic status of these women. Women noted higher self-confidence, greater decision-making power at home, and better educational opportunities for their children.

Figure:1 Show how institutional support facilitates entrepreneurship, financial constraints pose challenges, and how overcoming them results in empowerment.



Source: Compiled by Author

5. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship has turned out to be an essential catalyst for empowering Harichandanpur Block women of Odisha. It not only empowered them economically but also contributed towards increasing their social status and the ability of households and communities to make decisions. In spite of all these, significant obstacles like financial constraint, limited market linkage, and infrastructure bottlenecks still exist, hindering them. To maintain and amplify the effectiveness of entrepreneurship for tribal women, better financial inclusion, skill formation, and institutional assistance are in urgent need. Training programs and subsidies have facilitated them in developing necessary skills and financial support, enabling them to start small-scale ventures like self-help groups (SHGs), tailoring, handicrafts, and poultry rearing. Yet, the success of these ventures is limited by poor market access, the cost of raw materials, and

insufficient financial support. Non-governmental and government institutions have to cooperate with each other to develop policies that ensure credit accessibility with ease, enhance market linkages, and deliver specially designed training modules. Infrastructural upgradations, i.e., improved road connectivity and transportation facilities, would facilitate market access for women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship empowering tribal women is not only an economic imperative but also a move toward attaining gender equality and sustainable development. By overcoming the challenges that already exist and further strengthening the support systems, entrepreneurship can remain an effective tool for building self-reliance and community development. Providing a comprehensive and enduring approach will also solidify the entrepreneurial ecosystem and allow more tribal women to attain long-term success and empowerment.

Declaration by Authors

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