

Sustainable Practices in Forest-Based Entrepreneurship and Weekly Market Engagement Among Tribal Women

Dr G Jayanthi¹, Ms. Kalaiselvi K²

¹Assistant Professor, ²PhD Research Scholar Department of Economics, PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore

Abstract—The forest-based economy is primarily driven by women, who gather forest materials for both livelihood and daily needs, highlighting their deep connection to the forest. Despite various initiatives, their socioeconomic conditions have seen limited improvement. This study focuses on indigenous tribes in Coimbatore District, examining their forest-based activities, tribal affiliations, income usage, and livelihood challenges. It also evaluates government programmes aimed at enhancing their economic status. Data were collected through interviews and field surveys. The study concludes with actionable recommendations to improve the socioeconomic standing of indigenous women while respecting their reliance on forest resources and weekly market participation.

Index Terms—Tribal Women, Forest-Based Livelihood, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, Government Programs, Tribal Forest Product, Weekly market.

I. INTRODUCTION

All life on Earth depends on forests, which are among the most precious natural resources in the world. They are essential to preserving the equilibrium of the environment, biology, and ecology. Furthermore, India's woods have a special socioeconomic significance. From ancient times, women have had a deep bond with trees. The term "forest produce" refers to any material derived from forest resources. It is divided into two categories: "Minor Forest Produce," which includes things like grass, fruit, leaves, animal products, soil, and minerals, and "Major Forest Produce," which includes things like firewood, herbs, and timber. Weekly markets serve as crucial platforms where tribal women sell these forest products, gaining income to support their households. However, limited access to resources and structural issues hinder their participation and profitability.

A. Objectives of The Study:

- To analyze the Socio-Economic condition and Forest product Collections of Tribal women in Coimbatore District.
- To Identify the Key Challenges Faced by Tribal Women in Implementing Sustainable Practices in Weekly Market.

B. Statement of The Problem

Forests provide essential resources like food, medicine, and income for communities near woodlands, with non-timber forest products (NTFPs) playing a vital role. NTFPs improve food security but face challenges like inconsistent availability, lack of quality control, and labor-intensive processing. Weekly markets offer opportunities for tribal women to sell these products, yet they face barriers such as inadequate transport, price fluctuations, and middlemen exploitation. Limited research on women's participation in forest-based economic activities and weekly market dynamics in India leaves a gap in understanding their contributions and struggles. This study aims to explore tribal women's involvement in forest economies, the role of weekly markets in income generation, and sustainable strategies for their empowerment.

C. Hypothesis

- Tribal women's participation in weekly markets significantly impacts their economic empowerment and household income.
- Challenges such as lack of transportation, middlemen exploitation, and price instability reduce the profitability of tribal women's forest-based entrepreneurship.

D. Research Gap

Analysis of tribal women's forest product collection and their engagement with weekly markets has been a neglected area of research. While studies have

explored various aspects of tribal life, the intersection of forest-based entrepreneurship and weekly market participation remains underexplored. The lack of data on how weekly markets influence tribal women's economic activities and challenges in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Coimbatore District, highlights the need for focused research. This study attempts to bridge this gap by examining sustainable practices in forest-based entrepreneurship and the role of weekly markets in tribal women's livelihoods.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to comprehend the socioeconomic circumstances, the harvesting of forest products, and the problems that tribal women face in Coimbatore District, with a special focus on weekly market engagement. As per the 2011 Census, the district's indigenous population is 19,000. Using random sampling, a sample of 120 (2%) respondents was selected. Primary data was collected through structured interviews and field surveys. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Chi-square tests, and the Garrett ranking approach were used for data analysis. Limitations include the small sample size and potential inaccuracies in self-reported data.

A. Review of Literature:

Kumar et al. (2022) studied how tribal farmers access market information for minor forest products (MFP) in the HAT zone. They found that the Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) oversees the Market Information System (MIS), collecting market data on MFP arrivals and prices through visits to sales points. While data is recorded electronically and in writing at GPCMS, traders utilize market intelligence more effectively than farmers. The study highlights the need to train tribal farmers in using market data for post-harvest handling. Emphasis should also be placed on recording post-harvest information for improved decision-making. Tripathy (2020) analyzed the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on Odisha's tribal economy, particularly on minor forest produce (MFP) collection and trade. The lockdown disrupted livelihoods, causing distress sales and revenue losses for tribal communities during the peak MFP season. Although governments implemented measures like exempting MGNREGA work and allowing MFP collection, delayed policies and reverse migration of laborers compounded challenges. The study highlights the need

for timely interventions and strengthening tribal rights over forests and their resources. It underscores the vulnerability of tribal economies to external shocks.

B. Result and Discussion:

Table: 1-Socio Economic Conditions of Tribal Women Entrepreneur

Variable	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 20	2	2
	21 to 30	15	12
	31 to 40	31	26
	41 to 50	40	33
	Above 51	32	27
Total		120	100
Marital Status	Married	100	83
	Un Married	5	4
	Divorced	7	6
	Widow	8	7
Total		120	100
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	50	42
	Primary	33	27
	Secondary	32	27
	Higher Secondary	4	3
	Degree	1	1
Total		120	100
Type of Family	Joint	25	21
	Nuclear	95	79
Total		120	100
Family Income	Below 10,000	20	17
	10,001 to 15,000	36	30
	15,001 to 20,000	43	36
	Above 20,001	21	17
Total		120	100

Source: Primary Data

Tribal women entrepreneurs are mostly middle-aged (31-50 years), often the primary earners supporting their families. High illiteracy and low education levels limit their access to resources, affecting economic empowerment. The prevalence of nuclear families reflects shifting social norms, while most families earn ₹10,001–₹20,000, indicating economic vulnerability. These socio-economic challenges call for targeted

educational, economic, and social support systems. Addressing these issues can improve their living standards and promote greater economic independence.

Table 2-Problem Faced by Tribal Women Entrepreneur in Weekly Markets

Reasons	Garrett Score	Rank
Lack of Organized Marketing	39	8
Quality do not Justify the Price	52	5
High Cost of Transportation	58	2
Middle Man Problem	41	6
Inadequate Transport	63	1
Lack of Knowledge about Grading and Standardization of Vegetables	53	4
Non-Availability of Information	40	7
Fluctuation in Price	57	3

Source: Primary Data

Tribal women entrepreneurs face critical challenges, with inadequate transport and high transportation costs being the most pressing issues, limiting market access and reducing profitability. Price fluctuations and a lack of knowledge about grading and standardization further hinder their ability to achieve stable incomes and better prices. Middlemen reduce their earnings through unfair practices, while the absence of market information and organized marketing structures limits their competitiveness. Addressing these issues with targeted interventions in transportation, education, and marketing can enhance their market participation and economic empowerment. This, in turn, would improve their livelihoods and foster socio-economic advancement in tribal communities.

III. CONCLUSION

Tribal women entrepreneurs play critical roles in supporting their households through forest-based economic activities and weekly market participation. However, they face barriers such as illiteracy, low income, inadequate transport infrastructure, and market instability. Addressing these challenges

requires comprehensive support systems, including better transportation, market information, training on product grading, and microfinance access. Strengthening weekly market structures and empowering women's participation will not only enhance their livelihoods but also contribute to the overall socio-economic advancement of tribal communities. Implementing these sustainable practices is essential for fostering economic resilience and improving quality of life for tribal women.

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