

## **ATTITUDE OF BASTAR'S TRIBAL YOUTH TOWARDS BUSINESS SELF-EMPLOYMENT: A SURVEY BASED STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Against the backdrop of the Innovation Mahakumbh initiative, this paper examines the attitudes, awareness, and challenges faced by Scheduled Tribe youth in the Dantewada District of Chhattisgarh's Bastar division regarding business self-employment. This is a descriptive study in which primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire. To ensure data authenticity, validity test (attention check) questions were employed, after which a statistical analysis of 58 fully authentic responses was conducted. Our study finds that 63.8% of the youth prefer to establish self-employment within their own division rather than opting for traditional government jobs or migrating, and 81.0% are prepared to take business risks. Indicating a notable shift in the mindset of tribal youth, who increasingly aspire to become job creators rather than mere job seekers. Although there is a strong desire for entrepreneurship among the youth, the lack of proper mentorship and training (43.1%) and the lack of initial capital (41.4%) emerge as primary obstacles, requiring interventions on Practical and policy-level. Given the small sample size (N=58) and the descriptive design, these findings should be interpreted as preliminary indicators of attitudinal trends within the studied population rather than as broadly generalisable conclusions.

**Keywords:** Self-employment, Tribal Youth, Tribal Entrepreneurship, Bastar Division, Government Schemes, Skill Development, Paradigm Shift, Risk-taking Capacity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The participation of the tribal community is extremely crucial in India's growing economy, as they constitute a vital part of the country's demographic dividend. Historically, tribal society has primarily relied on agriculture, forest-produce collection, and limited government jobs for its livelihood. This traditional dependence has kept their economic development within a restricted scope. In the current scenario, due to an increasing population, shrinking agricultural holdings, and limited employment opportunities in the public sector, tribal youth face a significant crisis regarding their livelihood and future prospects. In regions like the Bastar Division, where complex geographical and sociopolitical challenges exist, this problem is further magnified. The Innovation Mahakumbh is a major governmental initiative designed to foster a culture of grassroots entrepreneurship and innovation. Within the framework of this initiative, transforming tribal youth from traditional job seekers into proactive job creators is a paramount objective. In this context, business self-employment serves not only as an effective means to eradicate unemployment but also as a potent pathway to make tribal societies economically empowered, self-reliant, and integrated into the national

mainstream. Through entrepreneurship, youth can harness local resources and contribute directly to the sustainable development of their region.

While several ambitious initiatives have been launched by the government to promote tribal entrepreneurship such as Stand-Up India, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, and the Van Dhan Vikas Yojana <sup>1</sup>, their actual impact in remote areas remains contingent on the psychological attitudes of the youth. Evaluating the performance of such schemes, Singh <sup>2</sup> observes that income-generation programmes for Scheduled Tribes have had mixed results across different states, indicating that financial provisioning alone does not translate into entrepreneurial uptake. True financial inclusion and market access are only achievable when the target demographic possesses the capacity to bear risks and receives proper guidance. This research therefore is a small-scale attempt to understand the psychological, informational, and practical barriers limiting the success of these entrepreneurial efforts in a specific tribal region.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Several recent studies on tribal entrepreneurship in India provide a foundation for this research. Kumari and Sharma <sup>3</sup>, in their review of the tribal entrepreneurship literature, identify low access to capital, limited entrepreneurial education, insufficient skill training, restricted market access, and socio-cultural factors as the principal challenges faced by tribal entrepreneurs, while noting that leveraging traditional knowledge, cooperative models, and digital tools constitute significant opportunities.

Closer to the geographical focus of the present study, Sharma et al. <sup>4</sup> investigated tribal entrepreneurs in the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh and reported that financial constraints, lack of technical expertise, low motivation levels, inadequate marketing infrastructure, and difficulty in crafting a clear business vision were the most frequently cited challenges. The same study identified agriculture, herbal products, tourism, handicrafts, and forest-product-based enterprises as the most promising opportunities for tribal communities in the state. These findings provide a useful point of comparison for the attitudes and barriers documented in the Bastar context.

Within Bastar itself, Acharya et al. <sup>5</sup> examined the entrepreneurial activity of tribal women engaged in the collection and marketing of non-timber forest produce (NTFP) across the district. Their study found that women contributed over 65% of household income derived from NTFPs and showed substantial skill in processing activities, but that their participation in marketing remained limited and that producer shares in the consumer rupee were low—indicating a clear gap between entrepreneurial capability and market access. Similar observations have been made in other tribal regions of India; Naik and Panda <sup>6</sup>, studying the Rayagada district of Odisha, report that innovation and entrepreneurship can become effective pathways to sustainable progress for tribal communities when supported by appropriate skilling and institutional scaffolding.

On the institutional side, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs <sup>2022</sup> reports that Van Dhan Vikas Kendras have played a significant role in connecting tribal women and youth with forest-produce-based micro-enterprises. While this initiative has helped with value addition, the report also notes that knowledge of e-commerce, digital marketing, and modern supply chains remains highly limited at the rural level, which restricts the wider reach of their products. Complementing this, Singh <sup>2</sup> documents the mixed performance of income-generation schemes run by the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), showing that even small amounts of financial, technical, and marketing support

can unlock substantial entrepreneurial capacity among tribal populations when delivered in an integrated manner.

Our present study builds upon these body of work by conducting a micro-statistical analysis of the shifting mindset and psychological confidence of Bastar's youth in the modern digital age, providing updated, region-specific insights on attitudes towards business self-employment that complement the existing literature on tribal entrepreneurship.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To measure the awareness, business aspirations, and attitudes of tribal youth towards self-employment.
- To identify the financial (e.g., lack of capital), social (e.g., family support), and psychological (e.g., fear of failure) barriers faced by youth in establishing and operating a business.
- To present policy and practical suggestions for policymakers, educational institutions, and the administration to promote the sustainable development of tribal entrepreneurship.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a descriptive analytical design focused on the tribal-dominated Bastar Division of Chhattisgarh. To ensure the findings are reasonably sound and authentic, rigorous checks were integrated into the data-collection process.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND INSTRUMENTATION**

Primary data was collected via a structured, standardised questionnaire administered digitally using Google Forms. To eliminate neutral responses and compel participants to provide a definitive positive or negative opinion, a 4-point forced-choice response format was adopted for the attitudinal items. Forced-choice formats are widely used in attitudinal surveys because they reduce acquiescence bias and the tendency towards midpoint responding, although it is acknowledged that scores produced by such formats are ipsative in nature and are therefore best interpreted within the sample rather than as inter-individual comparisons<sup>7</sup>. Secondary data was sourced from government reports, academic journals, and recognised statistical databases. The questionnaire was distributed via convenience sampling through digital channels including WhatsApp groups and college networks to Scheduled Tribe youth aged 18–30 plus in the district of Dantewada, Bastar. No probability-based based sampling was deployed and is acknowledged as a limitation of our study.

### **QUALITY CONTROL AND SAMPLE REFINEMENT**

To prevent straight-lining and sequence bias, question order was randomised, and dummy “trap” questions were strategically placed. Additionally, direct attention-check questions were included to verify respondent concentration. Of the initial 162 primary responses, 104 were rejected due to digital survey fatigue, failure in attention checks, or logical inconsistencies, resulting in a final sample of 58 valid responses. While this filtration yields high-quality data, the resulting exclusion rate of approximately 64% is acknowledged as a limitation and is discussed later in the paper. Given the small sample size and the exploratory nature of the study, the analysis is limited to frequencies and percentages. No inferential tests were applied, and the findings should be read as indicative patterns rather than statistically confirmed relationships.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The statistical analysis of the 58 authentic responses yields the following insights, with a tabular representation of the data presented below. 50% of the valid respondents were from age 18-21 years, 22% were from 22-25 years, 14% belonged to 26-30 years and remaining 14% belonged to the age 30 above.

*Table 1: Educational Qualification of Respondents*

Educational Level	Number (N=58)	Percentage (%)
Graduate	22	37.9%
Up to 12th standard	18	31.0%
Post Graduate	13	22.4%
ITI / Technical Diploma	5	8.6%

*Table 2: Priority of Youth for Shaping Their Future*

Priority	Number	Percentage (%)
Do own business staying in Bastar Division	37	63.8%
Prepare for government jobs	17	29.3%
Migrate to big cities for a private job	4	6.9%

*Table 3: Capacity to Bear Risk in Business*

Attitude Towards Risk	Number	Percentage (%)
Risk is inherent in business, I am ready	47	81.0%
Will do business only on the guarantee of no loss	6	10.3%
Do not want to take any risk at all	5	8.6%

*Table 4: Biggest Barrier in Starting a Business*

Main Barrier	Number	Percentage (%)
Lack of proper mentorship and training	25	43.1%
Lack of initial capital	24	41.4%
Complex processes of government offices/banks	5	8.6%
Lack of market to sell goods	4	6.9%

**Table 5: Awareness Regarding Government Self-Employment Schemes**

Level of Awareness	Number	Percentage (%)
Only heard the name, do not know the process	33	56.9%
Have full knowledge of scheme and process	13	22.4%
Absolutely no knowledge about the schemes	12	20.7%

**Table 6: Primary Requirement to Connect with Self-Employment**

Most Necessary Step	Number	Percentage (%)
Practical business training from school/college level	35	60.3%
Guarantee of product purchase by the government	11	19.0%
Collateral-free easy bank loans	8	13.8%
Promotion of successful tribal entrepreneurs	4	6.9%

- Table 1 shows that the largest segment of respondents (37.9%) are graduates, indicating that youth with higher educational attainment are actively seeking and evaluating employment alternatives beyond traditional sectors.
- A significant majority (63.8%) wish to utilise local resources to establish self-employment within their home division (Table 2). This indicates a shifting mindset that favours local economic contribution over out-migration or reliance on government jobs.
- Validating their professional self-confidence, 81.0% of the youth possess a positive attitude towards bearing business risk (Table 3). This challenges the stereotype that tribal youth are inherently averse to entrepreneurial uncertainties.
- Lack of proper mentorship and training (43.1%) and lack of initial capital (41.4%) emerge as closely matched primary barriers to launching a business, differing by only one respondent (Table 4). Both constraints should therefore be treated as roughly equivalent policy priorities. These patterns are similar to the challenges documented by Sharma et al.<sup>4</sup> among tribal entrepreneurs in Bilaspur.
- More than half of the respondents (56.9%) are familiar with the names of government schemes but lack actionable knowledge regarding the application processes, indicating a significant communication and implementation gap at the grassroots level (Table 5).

- An overwhelming 60.3% of youth identify practical business training at the academic level as their primary requirement (Table 6), underscoring an urgent need to reform theoretical educational frameworks to include functional entrepreneurial skills.

## RESULTS

Given the nature of a small, localised sample (N=58), the descriptive analysis of the primary data offers several preliminary yet insightful observations regarding the Scheduled Tribe (ST) youth of the Bastar Division:

- **Indications of Local Entrepreneurial Interest:** Within this sample, 63.8% of respondents expressed a preference for starting their own business while remaining in their home region. Conversely, only 6.9% indicated a desire to migrate to big cities for private jobs. This suggests a growing localised interest in entrepreneurship over out-migration, consistent with the pattern of local resource-based entrepreneurship documented among Bastar tribal women by Acharya et al.<sup>2017</sup>.
- **Evolving Social Perceptions:** Traditionally, government employment has been viewed as the ultimate measure of success in tribal societies. However, the responses indicate a gradual, localised shift in perception, with many youths acknowledging that successful businesspersons also garner social respect.
- **Openness to Business Risks:** Among the surveyed group, 81.0% indicated that they view risk as inherent to business and are prepared to face it. While this cannot be generalised to the entire demographic, it tentatively challenges the assumption that tribal youth are universally averse to entrepreneurial uncertainties.
- **Mentorship and Capital as Dual Primary Barriers:** Respondents identified “lack of proper mentorship and training” (43.1%) and “lack of initial capital” (41.4%) as barriers of essentially equal weight. This observation suggests that skill development and guidance merit as much policy attention as financial assistance, a conclusion also reached by Singh<sup>2</sup> in the context of NSTFDC schemes.
- **Gaps in Scheme Awareness:** The findings point toward potential communication gaps regarding government initiatives at the grassroots level. Over half of the participants (56.9%) reported having heard the names of schemes like Mudra Yojana or Stand-Up India but lacked knowledge about the application processes. Furthermore, 20.7% reported having no knowledge of these schemes at all.
- **Absence of Local Role Models:** A majority of the youth surveyed reported that they do not have successful local tribal business persons within their network. This lack of visible, relatable success stories may deprive emerging entrepreneurs of necessary practical motivation.
- **Educational Nuances:** A descriptive review of the data tentatively suggests a relationship between educational attainment and entrepreneurial interest. Specifically, graduates (37.9%) and technically educated youth in this sample showed the highest inclination toward exploring self-employment alternatives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To capitalise on this entrepreneurial willingness and integrate the tribal youth of Bastar into the mainstream economy, the following policy interventions are suggested:

- **Academic Integration of Practical Training:** Educational institutions should introduce mandated practical training in accounting, marketing, and legal

documentation through formalised Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) at the secondary and tertiary levels, directly addressing the 60.3% of respondents who prioritised this need (Table 6). Kumari and Sharma <sup>3</sup> similarly emphasise that skill and entrepreneurial education are central to bridging tribal communities into mainstream business.

- **Establishment of Single-Window Startup Cells:** To combat the procedural-awareness gap highlighted by the 56.9% of respondents familiar only with scheme names (Table 5), District Trade and Industries Centres (DICs) should establish Single-Window Startup Cells. These cells, working in partnership with local industry bodies, could offer free assistance with detailed project reports (DPRs) and loan applications, and help applicants navigate the NSTFDC and state-level tribal-finance mechanisms described by Singh <sup>2</sup>.
- **Promotion of Local Role Models:** The district administration should actively promote the success stories of first-generation local tribal entrepreneurs for example, the value-addition enterprises around NTFPs documented in Bastar by Acharya et al. <sup>2017</sup>—to provide tangible inspiration and help bridge the mentorship gap identified by 43.1% of respondents.
- **Targeted Digital Literacy and Communication:** Government schemes should be communicated in regional dialects such as Halbi and Gondi through block-level digital entrepreneurship workshops, specifically targeting the 20.7% of respondents currently unreachable by standard outreach methods.
- **Credit Guarantee Funds and Market Linkages:** Given that first-generation entrepreneurs often lack collateral, a specialised state-backed Credit Guarantee Fund should be established to facilitate easier access to business loans without stringent asset requirements, addressing the 41.4% of respondents who cited capital as a primary barrier. Market-linkage support is equally important, as weak producer-to-consumer chains have been shown to depress returns even when production-side capacity exists <sup>5</sup>.

## LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We acknowledge that this study has several limitations. First, the final sample size of 58 respondents, while yielding high-quality data after rigorous filtration, limits the statistical generalisability of findings to all tribal youth across the state or country. Second, the 64% attrition rate from the initial 162 responses, though justified by the study's strict attention-check protocol raises the possibility that the retained sample may differ systematically from the rejected respondents in ways not examined here. Third, the study relies on self-reported attitudinal data at a single point in time and does not capture behavioural outcomes or longitudinal change. Fourth, the use of a forced-choice response format, while helpful for avoiding neutral responses, produces scores that are ipsative in nature and should be interpreted as within-sample patterns rather than as absolute measures that could be directly compared against external benchmarks <sup>7</sup>.

These limitations notwithstanding, the data quality achieved through stringent attention checks, forced-choice scaling, and logical-consistency filters provides a reasonable baseline for further inquiry. Future research could build on these findings in several directions. Large-scale longitudinal studies would permit broader generalisation and could track how attitudes translate into actual enterprise formation over time. Comparative studies across different tribal divisions within Chhattisgarh We can, for example, by extending the line of work by

Sharma et al.<sup>4</sup> in Bilaspur or across adjacent states may clarify which findings are specific to Bastar and which reflect broader regional patterns. Similarly, Qualitative work or case studies with first-generation tribal entrepreneurs would add depth to the “mentorship gap” and “procedural ignorance” themes we identified here, particularly in understanding the cognitive drivers behind entrepreneurial fear and resilience among indigenous populations.

## CONCLUSION

Youth self-employment represents one of the most viable strategies for sustainable economic development and social stability in sensitive, tribal-dominated regions like Bastar. The descriptive findings of this study suggest that tribal youth are beginning to shed their traditional reliance on government jobs. Armed with self-confidence and an appetite for risk, many of the respondents aspire to become job creators—a pattern consistent with the broader literature on tribal entrepreneurship in India<sup>3,6</sup>. The primary obstacles are no longer a lack of ambition, but rather a combination of awareness and mentorship gaps alongside limited access to starting capital. The clearest single policy implication is that skill-and-mentorship interventions must be scaled alongside financial support, not treated as secondary to it. This study is among the first to document entrepreneurial attitudes specifically among the tribal youth of Bastar’s Dantewada using primary survey data, providing a localised baseline that complements the broader Chhattisgarh-level literature<sup>4</sup> and offers a starting point for larger-scale research. If policymakers can align financial assistance with robust, accessible business training and procedural simplification, the youth of Bastar have the potential to drive meaningful local and national economic contribution.

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