

Entrepreneurship as a Catalyst in Creating Sustainable Livelihood of the Handicraft Artisans of India

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ABSTRACT

This research tries to investigate the effect of entrepreneurship on the sustainable livelihood of handicraft artisans. The study focuses on to check the relations between sustainable livelihood, entrepreneurship and employment by providing insight into rural crafts activities and evaluating the decision to engage in the craft business. In this study, several literatures have been reviewed which are based on sustainable livelihood and entrepreneurial activities. The uniqueness of the paper is that this study uses the concept of entrepreneurship as a method to find ways to support the livelihood of the artisans, offering an innovative understanding of a phenomenon that has the potential to make a real contribution to the lives of the artisans.

Keywords: *Sustainable Livelihood; Artisans; Handicraft; Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Ability*

Introduction

In developing nations, artisanal and other non-agricultural occupations account for a significant portion of available livelihoods. Long associated with place and region, artisanal enterprises are occasionally classified as cultural forms of economic activity. Eastern India's economy is substantially reliant on the handicraft industry, as it is a major contributor to employment. The industry is economically significant due to the large number of employment opportunities, low infrastructure investment, and high value addition (Dana, 1999; Hazra, 2017). There is demand for handicrafts on both domestic and international markets. These artisans have an insufficient amount of money to support themselves. In fact, some of these artisans are so impoverished that they were compelled to abandon their traditional profession and seek wage-based employment. All of these factors contribute to the craftsmen's depression and poverty (Dutt, 2019). This work examines the means of subsistence of artisans who

manufacture and sell handicrafts. Not only are people concerned with reviving and generating employment in handicrafts, but also with eradicating poverty and improving living conditions in craft communities.

While there is an abundance of literature on sustainable livelihoods (Narula, Magray & Desore, 2017), there are few details about SLs in a developing country undergoing socioeconomic transformations for artisans (Luckman, 2013; Kontogianni et al., 2019). The greatest socioeconomic challenge for any developing nation is reducing poverty (Oyekunle, & Sirayi, 2018). The majority of literature in India focuses on the entrepreneurial livelihoods of rural farmers in the agricultural and allied sectors (Singh, 2013), whereas the research on the entrepreneurial livelihoods of rural artisans engaged in handicrafts is limited. The younger generation of this trade does not see any potential in these societies that produce traditional handicrafts; as a result, they have little interest in learning these crafts, enhancing their skills, or engaging in this sector. All of these factors contribute to the extinction of craft skills, the unemployment of youth, and their engagement in low-wage work, all of which contribute to low self-esteem, exploitation, deplorable working conditions, and further marginalisation.

Purpose of the study

This paper therefore discusses these explanations for artisans to understand the causes leading to their life-diversification behaviour and try to investigate any option which can lead to maintain their required standard of living and entrepreneurship has been identified as a conducive element. The authors reviewed the previous literatures and developed a conceptual model which can be used for future study.

Methodology

The present paper is qualitative in nature. The authors conducted a literature analysis in order to identify gaps for future study by proposing a conceptual model.

Literature Review

Sustainable Livelihood

According to Frank Ellis (2000), "a livelihood is a concept that co-defines the living conditions of a person or a household, comprising the properties (human, financial, social, physical, and natural capital), the activities, and access to them (through institutions and social standards)." Barrett, Reardon and Webb (2001) argued that poverty reduction strategies are typically aimed at increasing the poor's wealth by providing them with additional financial, capital, physical, natural, or social assets (Carney, 1998; Mohapatra & Saha, 2021). Rural artisans are traditionally from disadvantaged social and cultural groups because of their minimal economic resources, and weaving is typically the only livelihood practise (Anas, 2010). If parents engage in the development of the arts and develop their skills as craftsmen, they also

pass this know-how to their children. While efficiency increases the living standards of the craftsmen, they are able to enrol their children in training facilities so that they can further improve their skills and make a more productive contribution. Human capital is the accumulation of artisans' skills. In certain cases, innovations and modernization methods remain unknown to the craftsmen living in isolated rural areas. Due to a lack of financial planning, many artisans do not save money. Generally, they do not plan when and how much to pay; as a result of their enormous expenditures, they have very little money left to invest (Lent, 2020; Mohapatra & Saha, 2021). Stitching by hand is a difficult task in the production of textiles, so individuals must rely on machines to achieve rapid, competent efficiency. Modern clothing manufacturing requires computers to recognise a variety of designs, systems, patterns, and materials; therefore, technological advancement is a crucial field. To improve living conditions, it is essential to preserve physical infrastructure assets. When people are engaged in the production of goods, suitable infrastructure is required. Determining the obstacles to rural artisanal activities, upon which a great number of people in developing countries rely for employment and subsistence, is therefore an important area of research.

Theoretical Background of Human Capital with the livelihood

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "human capital as an ability of employees who are treated as a resource or commodity." The Oxford English Dictionary includes the concept that there is investment in people (e.g., education, training, health) which improves the productivity of a person. Human capital includes knowledge, experience, expertise and good health which, when combined, enable people to use different livelihood strategies and attain their own goals. Human capital relates to household work: education, knowledge and health (Ellis, 2000). Education is one of wealth, which leads to rising wages and developing livelihood practices. There is a correlation between household education and family income (Rubavel, 2014).

In the sense of sustainable livelihoods, human capital emerges as an attribute that influences livelihoods. In order to access all the other types of capital, human capital is required apart from its inherent value (Diebolt & Hippe, 2022). This makes it important for meaningful outcomes to be obtained in any direction in terms of livelihoods though inadequate as a stand-alone tool (UNDP, 2017). The practice of introducing the weaving trade to the next generation means that the whole essence of the art culture is passed to the next generation and is not just a livelihood. As a consequence, over thousands of years weaving have been amazingly stable. Rural Artisans are traditionally from disadvantaged social and cultural groups because of their minimal economic resources, and weaving is typically the only livelihood practice they can use in tandem with semi-subsistence farming (Anas, 2010). If parents engage in the development of arts and develop their skills as craftsmen, they also pass this know-how to children. While efficiency increases the living standards of the craftsmen, they are in a position to enrol their children in training facilities so that they can further improve their skills and

make a more productive contribution. Human capital is the collection of skills worked by the artisans. This expertise flows as returns on investment are greater than their expense (direct and indirect) (Diebolt & Hippe, 2022). The human capital can be compiled with health, education, skill and proper training (Ellis, 2000).

Theoretical Background of Financial Capital and Livelihood

Financial capital refers to financial instruments used by people in order to meet their living standards (UNDP, 2017). The term includes both flows and stocks, which may include both consumption and output. The quality is therefore crucial if the other variables or properties are to be used effectively (Odero, 2006). Financial capital includes both flows and capital resources, which will support both demand and production (Kabir *et al.*, 2012). The bank account helps to secure structured loans for livelihoods. Poor households can or may not be aware of opening a bank account and receiving a formal credit (Rubavel, 2014). The complexities of a major rise in the financial capital of households should be taken into account in close relation with other financial instruments, in particular with the more formal and informal loans. It can force rural households to change their living conditions. The stock of financial capital is a primary determinant of livelihood diversification needs and prospects. Cash income and loans are included in financial capital (Ding *et al.*, 2018).

In certain cases, the innovations and modernization methods remain oblivious of the craftsmen living in isolated rural areas. It is thus necessary for them to start producing their goods, using conventional materials and methods, so that they can know what types of crafts are in demand in the marketplace. The project and programs have been initiated in all the artisan societies participating in order to raise people's consciousness to use creative approaches and methods to boost profitability. Many craftsmen save nothing due to the lack of financial preparation. Mostly they don't intend when and how much to pay properly, very little money is left to invest even because of their huge expenditures (Yusuf, Yusuf & Yusuf, 2018).

Theoretical Background of Social Capital and Livelihood

Social capital comprises social infrastructure (networks, social relations, associations) from which individuals rely on different subsistence approaches involving concerted acts of social capital or social infrastructure (Scoones, 1998). In the rural areas, connections with neighbours, considered as a social capital, are significant and helpful in helping one another and sharing the assets (Rubavel, 2014). Membership of numerous social networks allows drawing on wealth and become informed of diverse facets of livelihood practices. Social networks contribute to the creation of emerging technology awareness and expertise (Rubavel, 2014). It is to be noted that poor households tend to have weak decision-making capability in subsistence practices (Dutt, 2019).

In most situations, handicrafts and other products need coordination, only one person is not involved, but groups of people are involved. Manufacturing processes thus entail coordination. For example, the works of more than one person are needed for a long piece of fabric embellished with various kinds of artistic skills like sticking, picking and so on. The processing of various types of products thus involves many tasks and skills. Craftsmen who excel in their company hire numerous other professional craftsmen to improve productivity. In order to manage subsistence events, links to the social network of the community-based organization, different associations, political affiliations and the social groups are necessary (Ellis, 2000).

Theoretical background of physical capital and livelihood

Physical capital requires basic services and industrial materials required to sustain livelihoods. The network explores structural developments that affect connectivity and access to public resources (UNDP, 2017). The physical properties are like access to road and transport (UNDP, 2017), housing and safe buildings (Ellis, 2000), access to water and sanitation (Ellis, 2000), clean and affordable energy (UNDP, 2017) etc. and technological tools help to select the livelihood tasks to take on and handle the livelihood and fix insecurity in livelihoods (Rubavel, 2014). Smallholder farmers' physical capital includes tangible assets (Arowolo, 2012). They are often commonly processed commodities and mostly supplied by public services to farmers (Arowolo, 2012). Infrastructure is an essential source of physical capital that is very essential to rural areas. Infrastructure requires physical improvements that help people fulfil their basic needs and be more efficient (Scoones, 1998).

The shortage of infrastructure for utilities contributes to vulnerability of sustaining operations. Transport, electricity, irrigation, technology and markets are the core four pillars of infrastructure in rural areas (Arowolo, 2012). Manually stitching is a difficult job in development of fabrics, so the individuals have to use machines to achieve fast efficient efficiency. In present-day life, clothing manufacturing requires computers to recognize various types of designs, systems, patterns and materials, so the upgrade of technology is considered an important field. It is important to retain physical infrastructure resources to boost living conditions. When people work in the production of commodities, appropriate infrastructure is needed. After the manufacturing cycle has been finished, the craftsmen are still ready to market and display their goods and hence the appropriate means of transport are necessary for them.

Theoretical background of natural capital and livelihood

Natural capital refers to things such as water, climate, soil, sunlight, trees, minerals, etc. (Scoones, 1998). Natural capital is used to characterize natural resources supplies, from which additional resources and services that can be helpful to livelihoods can be created. This group covers a wide range of tools such as land and soil, food production, water, air quality, forest resources, water supply etc (UNDP, 2017; Pereira, Shackleton

& Shackleton, 2006). West Bengal has a predominantly rural population that relies on natural resources for its livelihood, such as fertile land, livestock and water. Natural capitals are eroded, exhausted and unrivalled by disruptive or insufficient governance systems and processes that are necessary for rural livelihoods to live on.

The individual artisan must ensure that raw materials are of high quality and goods are manufactured by making them more durable and do not quickly wear out in manufacturing and development of arts and crafts. The key factors used in making crafts and different kinds of works of art are known as raw materials. For the manufacture of a final product, high quality raw materials are used.

Sustainable livelihood, entrepreneurship and employment opportunity

The strategy for sustainable livelihoods heightens sensitivity to the lives of the vulnerable. They coordinate and demonstrate how they contribute to limiting or expanding livelihood opportunities (Ramadani *et al.*, 2017). It will aid in the preparation of growth plans and determine the current activities' contribution to their sustainability (Serrat, 2017). It has been argued that rural entrepreneurship is a vital and successful component of living standards, productivity, and economic growth (Ozgen & Minsky, 2007). The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reported that countries with low gross domestic product require a high level of need-driven entrepreneurial activities (GDP). Promotion of entrepreneurship in economically depressed rural areas (Petrin & Gannon, 1997) is a crucial factor in revitalising the rural population. It has a significant impact on the standard of living of rural residents (Ozgen & Minsky, 2007). Increasing rural entrepreneurship would expedite the growth of autonomous rural communities, increase income streams, support infrastructure development, generate capacity, revitalise rural communities, and have a significant impact on reducing poverty (Dana, 1999; Ozgen & Minsky, 2007). Businesses make the greatest contribution to sustainable development by integrating environmental and social solutions into their primary business objective, delivering economically and socially superior products, and having a direct impact on the mass market and society (Guha, Mandal & Kujur, 2022a). Historically, artisan business was primarily tied to place and town and was frequently referred to in terms of cultural forms of enterprise (Ramadani *et al.*, 2017). Investing in artisanal goods offers a tremendous opportunity to improve the economic, environmental, and social conditions of rural communities through the global marketplace and the economic and social development of numerous rural households. With market liberalisation, tourism, increased labour mobility, and diversification of rural livelihoods, there have been both benefits and challenges for artisans (Ramadani *et al.*, 2017). The relationship between "full employment" and "sustainable livelihoods" has been investigated within the context of international efforts to promote economic growth and eradicate global poverty (Lawrence & Singh, 1996). In this analysis, the term "livelihood diversification" refers to individuals' efforts to find new income-generating opportunities, which vary greatly in their degree of freedom of choice (to diversify or not

to diversify). Many rural diversification activities include microenterprises, as the value of microenterprises for job creation and income generation in rural areas is increasingly recognised (Ellis, 2000).

Entrepreneurship, Employment opportunity and enhanced standard of living:

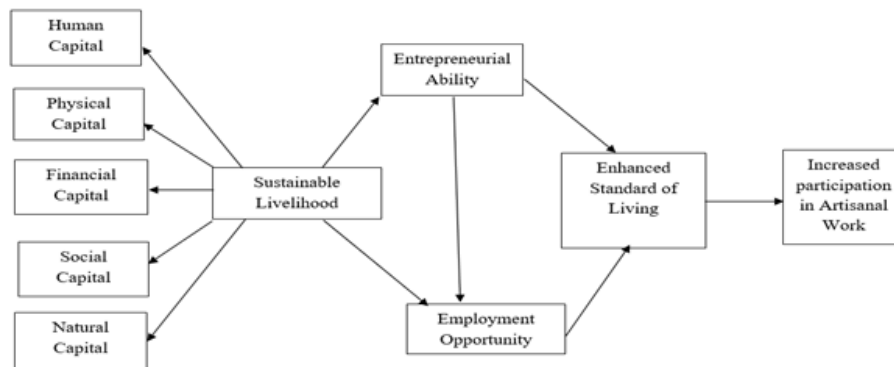
Entrepreneurship, employability, and creativity are gaining attention in India's economic sectors. The economic and social development of a nation depends primarily on the emergence of a robust and dynamic entrepreneurial private sector (Ugoani & Ibeenwo, 2015). Entrepreneurship is uniquely related to employment because it is a mechanism that generates employment opportunities. The term "self-employment" refers to a group of individuals who, based on their family background or demographic position, have aspirations and plans for a particular line of work (Panda, 2021). Entrepreneurs who primarily manage small to medium-sized businesses in the unorganised sector provide society with advantageous employment opportunities (Panda, 2021). Despite theories, realistic evolution of indigenous MSMEs (micro, small, and medium enterprises), and government policies and enterprise programming that resulted in regular change and programme modifications (Ugoani & Ibeenwo, 2015), the ultimate goal of reducing unemployment through entrepreneurship has yet to be realized. Therefore, both private and public providers must collectively pursue a systemic initiative to ensure sustainable employment through entrepreneurship (Nguyen, Costanzo & Karatas-Özkan, 2020).

Entrepreneurship is a significant contributor to rising living standards. Entrepreneurs have not only improved the standard of living by creating jobs, but they also satisfy human needs and desires. Additionally, they create and implement jobs that improve the quality of life. The creation of jobs by new and seasoned entrepreneurs is central to economic expansion (Roskrug, Poot & King, 2016). It is hoped that a growth-oriented entrepreneur is more important in a country because they can create jobs (Stam & Stel, 2011). Entrepreneurs implement new abilities that can create jobs and improve national, social, and economic conditions (Audretsch, Keilbach & Lehmann, 2006). Long-term statistics revealed a correlation between employment level and standard of living, which has proven to be the strongest correlation. While entrepreneurship has demonstrated a significant, long-term effect on all dimensions of quality or standard of living (Morris, 1998), its influence may, from a holistic standpoint, focus on the critical aspects of creativity, innovation, and individual and community lives (Marcketti, Niehm & Fuloria, 2006). According to Adewumi (2020), there is a need to help informal enterprises transition into the formal economy by constructing a bridge for them. He continues by stating that respectable work requires respectable business and that the government should make it easier for small businesses to thrive in order to create more jobs. According to Mahadea (2012), "to create new jobs, you must first create an environment conducive to entrepreneurs launch new businesses and then encourage them to grow their one-person operations into official organisations employing a sufficient number of individuals."

Entrepreneurship and enhanced standard of living and workforce participation in the present job:

As an antidote to these high unemployment rates in developing nations, entrepreneurship has been recognised as the linchpin of job creation, which subsequently fosters and sustains robust economic growth and performance (Peprah & Adekoya, 2020). A critical examination of these studies reveals that the question of whether entrepreneurship stimulates employment levels in developing nations, specifically India, remains unanswered. To address these research gaps, authors investigate how entrepreneurial activities affect employment growth and living standards in developing nations. According to Gupta (2021), despite the fact that the entrepreneurial performance in India has been characterised as poor, there are positive indications that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial aptitude in India are contributing to the growth of employment in the Indian economy. Moreover, India is rife with opportunities for self-employment and other entrepreneurial endeavours, but a dearth of research on Indian artisan entrepreneurship creates a significant knowledge gap regarding the contribution of entrepreneurship to economic growth and development in India (Peprah & Adekoya, 2020; Guha, Mandal & Kujur, 2022a).

Therefore, based on the previous literatures the conceptual framework of the study will be as follows:



Source: Authors' Compilation

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Conclusion

This paper investigated the relation between entrepreneurial ability and sustainable livelihood and aimed at answering whether enhanced living standard can influence work participation in the present artisanal job or not through the existing literatures. This study also aimed to emphasize the features of rural artisan entrepreneurs, the factors that influence their decision to engage in an artisanal activity, and the constraints that affect their growth and contribution to the economy - all in the context of the developing

world. The authors have aimed that with the help of this research work and the conceptual model a dimension may be addressed and this dimension surely add great values to the existing field.

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