

Employment Dynamics Among Pvtgs in Jharkhand: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are among the most marginalized communities in India, grappling with profound socio-economic challenges. This study examines the employment landscape of PVTGs in Jharkhand, through primary survey in Latehar district, a tribal-dominated district in Jharkhand, focusing on opportunities, obstacles, and current interventions. This paper dives into the exploration of the employment opportunities and challenges among PVTGs and seeks to offer insights into ways these communities can be incorporated into the larger economic framework while safeguarding their cultural heritage. The findings highlight the necessity for targeted policies, skill-building initiatives, and inclusive economic programs to overcome systemic barriers and foster sustainable livelihoods. Sectors such as handicrafts (including bamboo and terracotta), lac production, cultural arts like Sohrai-Khovar, and value-added products derived from forest resources should be promoted through improved infrastructure and market access supported by government initiatives, to enhance livelihood opportunities among PVTGs.

Keywords: Particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), employment challenges, emerging livelihood opportunities, handicrafts

1. Introduction

The Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India face multifaceted challenges, including economic marginalization, habitat constraints, declining population, poor standard of living, illiteracy and many more, which profoundly influence their employment opportunities and livelihood strategies. PVTGs mostly reside in ecologically delicate regions including forests, hills with subsistence living having poor connectivity to the world (Malik, 2020; Radhakrishna, 2009, Lokur Committee 1965).

In 1975, the Government of India established the Dhebar Commission to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups, categorizing them as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). The commission initially classified 52 communities as PTGs. Later, in 1993, an additional 23 groups were included, bringing the total to 75 PTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, distributed across 18 states and one Union Territory (UT), as per the 2011 Census. In 2006, the Government of India renamed PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) (G. Muralidhar, 2014). There are 8 PVTGs resides in Jharkhand namely Asur, Korwa, Birjia, Birhor, Sabar, Mal Pahariya, Sauria Pahariya and Parhaiya across several districts of Jharkhand. Geographically PVTGs are concentrated near Rajmahal hills in the north east and Pat or the Netarhat region in the south west region of Jharkhand (Census 2011).

The employment dynamics of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Jharkhand involve a complex combination of challenges and opportunities, shaped by the unique socio-economic and cultural

context of these communities. PVTGs in the region face numerous obstacles, including limited access to education, healthcare, and modern infrastructure, along with geographical isolation and reliance on traditional livelihoods. However, there are also opportunities to improve their economic participation through sustainable agricultural practices, skill development, and better market integration. This study explores the employment landscape of PVTGs in Jharkhand, examining the barriers they face and the potential opportunities for fostering economic growth and social inclusion. By understanding these dynamics, effective policies can be developed to promote sustainable development while respecting the cultural heritage of these communities.

2. Review of Literature

Neff et al. (2019) examine the social and economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, highlighting their poorer outcomes in poverty, education, and health compared to other social groups. The study also reveals that most STs are concentrated in occupations with high poverty levels, indicating significant occupational segregation. The authors argue that STs should not be viewed as a homogenous group due to their diversity, and that policies should be tailored to the specific needs of different Adivasi groups for effective improvement in their well-being. A one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to succeed.

Shankar et al. (2021) discuss the impact of the horticulture initiative under MGNREGA, introduced by the Jharkhand government in 2016. Initially a social safety net, MGNREGA has expanded to create long-term assets and improve livelihoods. The study examines the "Birsa Munda Baagwani Yojana" (BMBY), focusing on smallholders, underprivileged women, and tribal households in two districts of South Chhotanagpur division. Data from secondary sources and interviews with beneficiaries show that the scheme has significantly benefited unskilled workers, including scheduled tribes and castes, with training and support enhancing the program's reach and effectiveness.

Sharma et al. (2023) highlight that Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India face challenges like limited access to education, healthcare, and social security. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has launched various programs for their upliftment, including the Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) initiative. The 2023-24 budget introduced new schemes, such as the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission, aimed at improving infrastructure, healthcare, and education with an allocation of ₹15,000 crore. This paper analyzes these programs, focusing on PVTGs in Jharkhand.

Behera (2021) in his study assesses the livelihood vulnerability (LVA) of forest dwellers in Jharkhand and Odisha, covering 15 tribes, including eight particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs). Districts were chosen based on forest density, tribal population, and poverty levels (MPI & HDI). Using a participatory and survey-based approach, the authors developed a simple index for LVA, termed participatory livelihood vulnerability assessment (PLVA). Findings show that PVTGs dependent on shifting cultivation with little or no land are the most vulnerable, relying on minor forest produce and social welfare programs as safety nets. The study calls for strengthening livelihood opportunities for these communities.

Kannamudaiyar and Chellasamy (2023) in their paper examines eco-tourism as a sustainable livelihood for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu, India. Using field visits, interviews, and policy analysis, it highlights eco-tourism's potential to boost PVTG incomes while promoting conservation and cultural preservation. However, it stresses the need for careful planning to avoid environmental or cultural harm. The study recommends collaboration among policymakers, eco-tourism operators, and PVTG communities to develop a sustainable and inclusive eco-tourism model.

Mutluri (2020) examines the livelihoods of PVTG youth, traditionally reliant on forests and natural

resources. Despite changes in tribal economies, their development remains limited, with minimal impact from globalization and urbanization. PVTG youth need financial support, access to government schemes, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Media should highlight their challenges, and researchers should focus on their economic issues to help improve their quality of life.

Shihab and Patil (2020) examine the Koraga tribe, a PVTG in Kerala and Karnataka, faces significant livelihood challenges. A study of 50 Koraga youth in Kasaragod, Kerala, found most lack land ownership and rely on traditional, nature-based occupations or menial jobs, leading to a hand-to-mouth existence. The study underscores the need for skill training, capacity building, targeted schemes, and awareness programs to help Koraga youth access government support and improve their livelihoods.

A study by Ekka (2013) explored the use of traditional medicine by tribal communities in Chhattisgarh for anti-fertility purposes. Among the Hill Korwas community, the consumption of a traditional beverage called "Hadia" was noted. Made from rice flour, Gondly, or Marua, this drink is prepared by boiling the mixture and adding 'Ranu', a fermented substance derived from various roots and commercially sold. While Mahua flowers can also be used to make liquor, the Hill Korwas prefer Hadia over alcoholic drinks. After fermenting for three to four days, the beverage is diluted with water before consumption.

According to Khan (2018) the Hill Korwas, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in Chhattisgarh, are an indigenous community with distinct cultural practices. They rely on shifting cultivation and paddy farming for sustenance and follow ancestral beliefs centered around deities like Khuria Rani and Sigir Deo. Their society is structured into five totemistic clans and observes traditional marriage customs. Living on the Khudia plateau, their unique geography has helped preserve their way of life, though they are gradually shifting from hunting to settled farming. Development policies must respect their cultural heritage while addressing their evolving needs.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim of the study

This study aims to examine the current livelihood practices, opportunities, and challenges faced by PVTGs in parts of Jharkhand, while also proposing alternative livelihoods with potential to empower these communities.

3.2 Objectives

1. To assess the geographical challenges of Latehar district of Jharkhand.
2. To identify employment opportunities available to PVTGs.
3. To identify emerging or potential employment opportunities for PVTGs
4. To analyse the challenges hindering their access to employment.
5. To recommend strategies for improving employment outcomes for PVTGs.

3.3 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to explore the existing employment opportunities and propose alternative livelihoods with growth potential for improved income generation. Mahuadanr Block in Latehar has been chosen as the field study location, representing other areas in Jharkhand where PVTGs reside.

3.4 Sample and data collection

Using stratified random sampling, Mahuadanr Block in Latehar, known for its significant tribal population and diverse culture has been selected for the primary data collection. The area's varied geography offers a

representative sample of the living conditions common to PVTG communities across Jharkhand. Around 10 villages and 120 households from the Asur, Korwa, and Birjia tribes were interviewed using random sampling. Secondary sources like reports of Ministry of Tribal affairs, Van Dhan Yojana, ICAR, JASCOLAMPF etc are referred. Using a mixed-method approach of interviews, surveys, and secondary data analysis, it examines the impact of habitat, socio-economic factors, government policies, and infrastructure on employment. Key factors like geography, soil type, forest access, land holdings, and connectivity are explored.

3.5 Limitations of the study

A limitation of the study is that it focuses on three PVTGs namely Asur, Korwa, and Birjia in Latehar district for the representation of other parts of Jharkhand where PVTGs reside. While the characteristics of these groups largely reflect those of other PVTGs in different regions, there may be some variations.

4. Findings of the study

4.1 Brief characteristics of resources available for PVTGs in Latehar district

Table 1: This table highlights the basic features of PVTGs residing in Latehar district of Jharkhand.

Indicators	Description
Geographical Location	The PVTGs in the Mahuadanr block reside in the Pat region, the highest area in Jharkhand, specifically in Netarhat. This region is characterized by dense forests and scenic valleys, predominantly featuring tropical deciduous forests.
Soil Type	The soil in this region is laterite, rich in aluminium, iron oxide, and manganese oxide. It has high iron content but is low in phosphorus, nitrogen, and potash, making it prone to acidic reactions. In simple terms, its fertility is quite low. As a result, only small quantities of millets and occasionally vegetables are cultivated, primarily for self-consumption.
Access to Forest Products	The primary forest products utilized by the PVTGs in the Pat region include bamboo, mahua, and wood. However, their access to these resources has been significantly restricted due to the regulations imposed by the Forest Protection Act.
Land Holdings	PVTGs possess very small landholdings, typically ranging from 5 to 40 dismils. Much of the region falls under forest cover, and historically, these communities resided in hilly areas and deep within forests. However, the enactment of forest laws forced them to relocate from their original habitats.

<p>Connectivity</p>	<p>PVTGs live in forested areas, which isolates them from the outside world. Unpaved and poorly maintained roads make travel difficult, especially during the monsoon. The lack of infrastructure limits access to essential services like healthcare, education, and markets, further marginalizing these communities.</p>
<p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>The areas where PVTGs reside lack essential infrastructure, including electricity, proper roads, adequate water facilities, schools, and healthcare centers. Health centers are often situated more than 10-15 kilometers away, making access to medical services particularly difficult for these communities.</p>
<p>Distance from Main Town/Block</p>	<p>Most PVTGs are located 30-80 kilometers from Mahuadanr block, near Netarhat, with limited transportation options. Poor roads and lack of public transport isolate them, restricting access to administrative support, markets, education, and healthcare, further deepening their socio-economic challenges.</p>

Author’s own Compilation

Source: field survey, March 2024

4.2 Employment Opportunities for PVTGs

Employment opportunities for PVTGs can be categorized into two main types: traditional and emerging. Traditional employment opportunities refer to those occupations and livelihoods that have been prevalent within these communities for generations, often linked to agriculture, forest-based resources, and handicrafts. These are well-established but may be limited in scope due to changing environmental and social dynamics.

On the other hand, emerging or potential employment opportunities are those that could provide economic growth and stability while respecting and preserving the cultural heritage of these communities. These opportunities may arise from sectors such as eco-tourism, sustainable farming, and the promotion of traditional crafts, offering a balance between modern economic development and cultural preservation. Both categories of employment are crucial for fostering sustainable livelihoods for PVTGs.

Traditional or available livelihood opportunities

PVTGs in Latehar have traditionally depended on hunting, collecting forest products, and practicing shifting cultivation. The collection of minor forest produce (MFP), such as tendu leaves and mahua flowers, offers seasonal income; however, this source of livelihood is unstable and lacks long-term financial security.

Table 2: This table highlights the livelihood opportunities that are either traditionally practiced or currently accessible to PVTGs in Jharkhand.

Sector	Employment opportunities	Description
Agriculture and Allied	Farming, Livestock Rearing, Sericulture, and Horticulture	PVTGs mainly practice subsistence farming, growing millets, rice, and maize using traditional methods and cattle rearing. However, low soil fertility and reliance on rain-fed agriculture limit productivity.
Forest-Based Livelihoods	Collection of Minor Forest Produce (MFP), Mahua, Honey Processing	It includes collecting and processing resources like tendu leaves, sal seeds, medicinal herbs, honey, and bamboo. These activities offer seasonal income and help preserve traditional knowledge and forest biodiversity.
Mining and Quarrying	Labor in bauxite Mining and loading, Stone Quarrying	Engaging in bauxite mining and loading, as well as stone quarrying, has been a prevalent occupation for PVTGs, providing a source of livelihood through labor-intensive activities.
Government Initiatives	MGNREGA (Labor Work), Tribal Welfare Schemes	Employment opportunities through rural employment guarantee programs and PVTG-specific schemes have been significant sources of livelihood for PVTGs, providing them with work and income security.

Author’s own compilation

Source: Field survey March 2024

4.3 Emerging or Potential employment Opportunities

Recent initiatives in eco-tourism, handicrafts, and small-scale enterprises have opened up new avenues for livelihood generation among PVTGs, offering sustainable economic opportunities while preserving their cultural heritage. Additionally, the establishment and promotion of self-help groups (SHGs) have empowered many tribal women, enabling them to participate in micro-businesses such as the production of traditional crafts, food processing, and small-scale trade. These efforts not only provide financial independence but also foster community cohesion and skill development. The integration of these initiatives with market linkages and capacity-building programs can further enhance their impact on tribal

livelihoods.

Table 3: This table highlights the potential and emerging livelihood opportunities for PVTGs in Jharkhand.

Sector	Employment opportunities	Description
Agriculture and allied	Lac production, millets production, organic farming, sericulture and horticulture	Lac farming, now recognized as an agricultural activity, is in high demand for its industrial uses. Promoting millet farming, sericulture, horticulture, and organic practices supports food security and sustainable incomes.
Forest-Based Livelihoods	Sal plating and bowls, khijoor Patia (mat)	Harnessing forest resources to produce value-added products and foster sustainable income generation.
Handicrafts and Artisanship	Blacksmithing, Cane and Bamboo Craft, Jewellery Making, terracotta crafts	Incorporating modern design, production, and marketing strategies enables artisans to reach wider audiences and boost demand. This blend of tradition and innovation enhances economic opportunities while preserving cultural authenticity.
Livestock Rearing	Goat Farming, Poultry Farming, Dairy Production	Improving animal husbandry practices through technical guidance and financial assistance can be a great source of income.
Construction and Labor Work	Masonry, Daily Wage Labor, Road Construction	Opportunities in rural and urban infrastructure development projects can serve as valuable sources of livelihood, providing employment and economic benefits to local communities.
Food Processing	Mahua Processing, Pickle Making, Local Snacks Production	Adding value to locally available resources can significantly boost income for PVTGs by transforming raw materials into finished or semi-finished products. This process not only enhances the market value of

		their products but also creates new economic opportunities.
Ecotourism	Homestays, Adventure Guides, Cultural Performances, local cuisine food points	Developing community-based ecotourism to promote local culture and natural beauty offers sustainable livelihood opportunities. It involves local communities in managing tourism, preserving heritage, and fostering economic growth through activities like guided tours, homestays, and handicrafts.
Indigenous arts	Sohrai -Khovar Paintings, Dokra arts	Sohrai-Khovar arts, especially after receiving the GI tag in 2021, have the potential to be a significant source of income due to their unique characteristics.
Education and Awareness	Tribal Language Teaching, Community Tutors, Awareness Program Trainers	Leveraging traditional knowledge for educational initiatives and awareness programs can serve as a means of livelihood for PVTGs.
Art and Culture	Tribal Dance and Music Troupes, Event Performers, Storytelling	Preserving and showcasing cultural heritage can open doors to opportunities in arts and performance. This approach not only promotes traditional art forms but also provides sustainable livelihoods.
Technology-Based Roles	Mobile Repairing, Digital Literacy Trainers, E-Governance Support	Empowering youth with modern technological skills can significantly enhance their employability and career prospects. This focus on skill development bridges the gap between education and industry demands.
Health and Wellness	Traditional Healing Practices, ASHA workers, Herbal Product Sellers	Integrating traditional wisdom with modern practices can transform the health and wellness sectors. This approach

		promotes holistic care while preserving cultural heritage.
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Author’s own compilation

Source: secondary sources

These opportunities blend traditional practices with modern approaches, fostering sustainable growth. By incorporating contemporary methods, they also enable income diversification, helping communities thrive. This balance promotes long-term development while preserving cultural heritage.

4.3 Challenges faced by PVTGs in accessing employment opportunities.

Table 4: It highlights the various challenges PVTGs face in accessing employment opportunities.

Category	Challenges	Description
Geographical Barriers	Unfavourable Climate, infertile soils, low rainfall	These factors create an unfavourable environment for agriculture and forest product development.
Infrastructural Barriers	Poor connectivity, limited market access, lack of industries	Remote areas often lack essential infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and digital connectivity. Additionally, there is inadequate infrastructure to connect PVTG products to broader markets, and limited industries or employment opportunities exist near tribal regions.
Economic Barriers	Poverty and lack of capital	Scarcity of financial resources to invest in skill development or entrepreneurial ventures.
Social and cultural factors	Resistance to change by tribes, gender discrimination, generational shifts	Younger generations are shifting away from traditional livelihoods due to a lack of recognition and support, coupled with a fear of losing cultural identity and unfamiliarity with modern economic practices.
Psychological barriers	Negative perception towards mainstream profession, lack of motivation, fear of failure	Psychological barriers pose a significant constraint to entrepreneurship and the adoption of new professions for livelihood among PVTGs.

Political barriers	Inefficient Implementation of Schemes, Lack of Awareness of Government Schemes, administrative complexities	Leakages in welfare schemes and lack of accountability hinder effective implementation. Many PVTGs are unaware of available employment and skill development initiatives, and face complex application processes.
Health and Nutrition	Malnutrition and Poor Health	Health challenges lower productivity and hinder participation in economic activities.

Author’s own compilation

Source: secondary sources

5. Conclusion

This Paper offers valuable insights into the nexus between habitat characteristics, challenges and employment dynamics among PVTGs in Latehar District, Jharkhand. By elucidating the socio-economic complexities and environmental challenges faced by PVTGs, the research contributes to the formulation of evidence-based strategies for promoting inclusive and sustainable development in tribal regions. It suggests proper connectivity and technical and digital literacy as the main catalyst for providing employment opportunities along with better infrastructure for health, education and Market. Employment dynamics among PVTGs in Latehar are shaped by a complex interplay of traditional practices, systemic barriers, and emerging opportunities. While challenges persist, targeted interventions and inclusive policies can bridge the gaps, ensuring sustainable livelihoods for these communities. Empowering PVTGs requires a holistic approach that respects their cultural identity while integrating them into the economic mainstream.

6. Recommendations

To empower PVTGs, it is crucial to enhance connectivity through improved infrastructure and promote digital and technical literacy to bridge the digital divide. Soil testing should be conducted to identify optimal crops, enabling efficient use of agricultural land, while training and resources for sustainable farming practices can boost productivity. Health and education facilities must be upgraded to cater to the unique needs of PVTGs, along with targeted skill development programs aligned with market demands. Traditional livelihoods, such as handicrafts and forest-based activities, should be supported through modern tools and better market access. Inclusive policies that address systemic barriers, provide access to welfare schemes, and encourage entrepreneurship can create sustainable livelihood opportunities. A holistic approach that integrates economic development with cultural preservation and community participation will ensure that PVTGs achieve inclusive and sustainable growth.

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