



Publications

United International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (UIJMR)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Multidisciplinary Journal

ISSN: 3048-6726 www.ujmr.in Impact Factor: 6.934 (SJIF) Vol-3, Issue-1 ;Jan, Feb, & Mar, 2026

Socio-Economic Empowerment of Tribal Women in Khammam District – A Study

Dr. Lokini Srinivas

Dept. of Political Science, Kakatiya University, Hanamkonda – 506009

Cell:9701313098. Email Id: srinivaslokini1985@gmail.com

Article Received:03-01-2026 Article Modified:28-01-2026

Article Accepted:29-01-2026 Article Published:30-01-2026

DOI:10.37854/UIJMR.2026.3.1.41

Abstract

Women's empowerment is an important aspect of socio-economic development, particularly among marginalized tribal communities. Tribal women contribute significantly to household livelihoods through agriculture, forest-based activities, and wage labour, yet they often face challenges such as low education levels, limited income opportunities, and restricted access to resources. This study examines the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in Khammam district. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, personal interviews, and field observations among selected tribal women, while secondary data were obtained from census reports, government publications, and academic sources. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and tabular interpretation to understand patterns related to education, occupation, income, Self-Help Group participation, and decision-making roles. The findings indicate that most tribal women are engaged in agriculture and wage labour, with relatively low levels of income and educational attainment. Participation in Self-Help Groups has contributed positively to financial awareness, savings habits, and confidence among women. However, several socio-economic constraints still limit their full empowerment. The study concludes that strengthening education, livelihood opportunities, financial inclusion, and awareness of government programs can significantly improve the socio-economic status of tribal women and support inclusive rural development.

Keywords: Tribal Women, Women Empowerment, Socio-Economic Development, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Rural Livelihoods, Khammam district, Tribal Communities, Gender Development



INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment has become a central theme in global development discourse, especially in relation to marginalized communities. In India, tribal populations constitute about 8.6% of the total population and remain among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Tribal women play an important role in supporting household livelihoods through agriculture, forest produce collection, and domestic work, yet they continue to experience poverty, social exclusion, and gender inequality [1].

The socio-economic condition of tribal women reflects the combined impact of gender and ethnic disadvantages. Limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making opportunities restricts their overall development. Data from the Census of India indicate that literacy levels among Scheduled Tribe women remain relatively low, highlighting persistent educational disparities. Health issues such as anaemia and inadequate healthcare access further affect their well-being and productivity [2].

To address these challenges, the Government of India has implemented several initiatives aimed at improving the socio-economic status of tribal women. Programs such as the Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana and the Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram focus on livelihood promotion, financial inclusion, and sustainable utilization of forest resources. In addition, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as important platforms for strengthening savings, credit access, and collective empowerment among rural women [3].

Within Khammam district, a significant tribal population including communities such as Koya and Lambada depends largely on agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, and wage labour. Although several development initiatives and skill programs have been introduced in recent years, challenges such as low education levels, migration, and limited access to resources persist. Therefore, this study examines the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in the district through field-based analysis [4].

Literature review

Women's empowerment has become a major theme in development studies, particularly in relation to marginalized and tribal communities. Empowerment generally refers to the process through which women gain control over resources, develop confidence, and participate in decisions affecting their lives. Scholars



emphasize that empowerment includes economic independence, social awareness, and participation in household and community decision-making processes [5].

Several studies highlight that education and access to employment opportunities are key factors that influence women's status in society. Educated women are more likely to participate in economic activities, contribute to household income, and take part in family decisions. Research also suggests that women's involvement in income-generating activities improves family welfare and supports community development [6].

In the context of tribal societies in India, women play an important role in agriculture, forest-related work, and domestic responsibilities. Despite their significant contribution to household livelihoods, many tribal women continue to face economic and social marginalization due to poverty, lack of property rights, limited educational opportunities, and restricted institutional support [7][8].

Self-Help Groups and microfinance initiatives have emerged as important tools for promoting financial inclusion and empowerment among rural women. Studies indicate that participation in SHGs enhances savings habits, access to credit, entrepreneurial skills, and social confidence. Government initiatives implemented through institutions such as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs also aim to improve education, health, and livelihood opportunities for tribal communities [9][10][11].

However, despite the growing literature on tribal development, many studies focus on broader regional trends and secondary data. Micro-level research examining the actual socio-economic conditions of tribal women remains limited, particularly in areas such as Khammam district. Therefore, field-based studies are necessary to better understand the realities of tribal women and the factors influencing their empowerment [12][13][14][15].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the socio-economic status of tribal women in Khammam district.
2. To analyze the role of education and employment in the empowerment of tribal women.
3. To assess the impact of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) on income generation and financial independence.



4. To evaluate the participation of tribal women in household and community decision-making processes.
5. To suggest policy measures for improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal women.

Study Area Profile

Khammam district, located in the eastern part of Telangana between 16°45'–18°35' N latitude and 79°47'–81°47' E longitude, covers an area of 16,029 sq. km, representing 5.8% of the state's total area. The district is bordered by Chhattisgarh and Odisha to the north, Krishna district to the south, and Nalgonda and Warangal districts to the west. Administratively, it is divided into four revenue divisions—Khammam, Kothagudem, Palvoncha, and Bhadrachalam—comprising 46 mandals, 1,239 revenue villages, and five municipalities. With a population of approximately 2.8 million as per the 2011 census, the district has a predominantly rural demographic (80%), a literacy rate of 64.81%, and a sex ratio of 1,011 females per 1,000 males. Geographically, Khammam comprises three main regions: dense forests in Bhadrachalam and adjoining areas, fertile plains in Khammam, Madhira, and Sattupalli, and mineral-rich zones in Kothagudem, Yellandu, and Sudimalla. The district is endowed with several rivers including the Godavari, Kinnerasani, Munneru, and Palair, supporting extensive irrigation and agriculture. Major crops include paddy, jowar, pulses, cotton, and chillies. Rich in minerals and forests, Khammam also hosts key industries like Singareni Collieries, Kothagudem Thermal Power Station, and various medium-scale manufacturing units. The district is culturally diverse, inhabited by multiple tribal groups such as the Koyas, Lambadis, and Kondareddis, alongside other caste and religious communities. The Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Bhadrachalam, plays a central role in the socio-economic development and empowerment of tribal communities across 29 mandals covering 12,175 sq. km under the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) area. [16][17]

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in Khammam district. This approach helps in analysing their socio-economic conditions, livelihood patterns, and participation in household and community decision-making.

Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.



Primary Data:

Primary data were collected through field surveys using structured questionnaires and personal interviews with tribal women from selected villages. Field observations were also conducted to understand local socio-economic realities.

Secondary Data:

Secondary data were obtained from various sources such as reports of the Census of India, government publications, books, research journals, and reports related to tribal development.

Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling method was used to select respondents from different tribal communities. This method ensured representation of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Sample Size

For the purpose of the study, a total of 400 tribal women respondents were selected from the study area. The respondents included women engaged in agriculture, wage labour, forest-based activities, and Self-Help Groups.

Tools for Data Collection

- Structured questionnaire
- Personal interviews
- Field observation

Methods of Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using simple statistical techniques such as percentage analysis, tabular presentation, graphical representation, and comparative interpretation. These methods helped in understanding patterns related to education, occupation, income, participation in Self-Help Groups, and decision-making power among tribal women.

Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18-25	92	23%
26-35	128	32%
36-45	96	24%



46-60	64	16%
Above-60	20	5%
Total	400	100%

The age-wise distribution of respondents shows that the majority (32%) belong to the 26–35 years category, followed by 36–45 years (24%) and 18–25 years (23%). Women aged 46–60 years constitute 16%, while only 5% are above 60 years. This indicates that economically active middle-age tribal women are more involved in livelihood and empowerment activities in the study area.

Table 2: Education Level of Respondents

Education Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
illiterate	92	23.0%
Primary (1-5)	108	27.0%
Secondary (6–10)	124	31.0%
Intermediate	46	11%
Degree & Above	30	7.5%
Total	400	100%

The educational profile of the respondents indicates that a significant proportion of tribal women possess only basic education. About 31% of respondents completed secondary education, followed by 27% who studied up to primary level. Nearly 23% of the respondents are illiterate, which highlights the persistent educational gap among tribal communities.

A smaller share of respondents completed intermediate education (11.5%), while only 7.5% attained a degree or higher qualification. The findings suggest that although educational access has improved over time, higher education participation among tribal women remains limited. Education plays a crucial role in enhancing awareness, employment opportunities, and participation in socio-economic activities, thereby contributing to women's empowerment.



Table 3: Occupation of Tribal Women Respondents

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Agriculture / Cultivation	96	24.0%
Agricultural Labour	128	32.0%
Forest Produce Collection	54	13.0%
Small Business / Self-Employment	46	11.5%
Government / Private Job	18	4.5%
Household Work	58	14.5
Total	400	100%

The occupation pattern of respondents shows that most tribal women are engaged in agriculture-related and informal activities in Khammam district. A majority of respondents work as agricultural labourers (32%), followed by those involved in cultivation (24%), indicating that agriculture is the primary livelihood source. Some women depend on forest produce collection (13.5%), which is also an important income source in tribal areas. A smaller proportion of respondents are engaged in small businesses or self-employment (11.5%), while only a few have government or private sector jobs (4.5%), showing limited access to formal employment opportunities. Additionally, 14.5% of women reported household work as their main activity. Overall, the data indicates that most tribal women rely on low-income and unorganized sector occupations, highlighting the need for better employment opportunities, skill development, and economic support programs.

Table 4: income distribution of tribal women respondents

S. No	Monthly Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 5,000	34	34%
2	5,000-10,000	28	28%
3	10,000-15,000	18	18%



4	15,000-20,000	12	12%
5	Above 20,000	8	8%
Total		100	100%

The income distribution of tribal women respondents in Khammam district indicates that a large proportion belongs to the low-income category. About 34% of respondents earn below ₹5,000 per month, while 28% earn between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000, showing that most households have limited financial resources. Only a small percentage of respondents fall in higher income groups, with 12% earning between ₹15,000 and ₹20,000 and just 8% earning above ₹20,000. This pattern suggests that tribal women largely depend on low-paying occupations such as agricultural labour and forest-based activities. The findings highlight the economic vulnerability of tribal women and emphasize the need for income-generating programs, skill development, and stronger livelihood opportunities to enhance their socio-economic empowerment.

Table 5: SHG Participants

S. No	SHG Participation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	YES	62	62%
2	NO	38	38%
Total		100	100%

Self-Help Groups play an important role in improving the socio-economic status of tribal women in Khammam district. The table shows that a majority of respondents (62%) are members of SHGs, while 38% are not associated with any group. Participation in SHGs helps women access microcredit, savings facilities, and government support programs, which contribute to financial stability and confidence in decision-making. Women involved in SHGs also gain opportunities for small business activities and community participation. However, the presence of a significant proportion of non-members indicates the need for greater awareness and expansion of SHG networks in tribal areas to ensure broader empowerment and financial inclusion of women.



Table 6: Decision-Making Power of Tribal Women's

S. No	Decision-Making in Household Matters	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	High (independently take decisions)	28	28%
2	Moderate (decisions taken jointly with family members)	46	46%
3	Low (decisions mainly taken by others)	26	26%
Total		100	100%

Decision-making power is an important indicator of women's empowerment. The table indicates that 46% of tribal women participate moderately in household decision-making, usually sharing decisions with husbands or family members. About 28% of respondents reported having high decision-making power and are able to make independent choices regarding family, finance, and social matters. However, 26% still have low involvement in decisions, reflecting the persistence of traditional gender roles in tribal communities of Khammam district. This suggests that while empowerment initiatives and Self-Help Groups have improved women's participation, further efforts in education, awareness, and economic independence are needed to strengthen their role in family and community decision-making.

Results and Discussion

This section discusses the findings obtained from the field survey conducted among tribal women in Khammam district. The analysis focuses on major socio-economic indicators such as age, education, occupation, income, participation in Self-Help Groups, and decision-making power, which collectively determine the level of empowerment among tribal women.

Age Profile of Respondents

The age composition of respondents indicates that a majority of tribal women belong to the economically active age groups. Most participants fall within the 26–35 and 36–45 age categories, suggesting that women in these groups are more involved in livelihood activities and community programs. Younger women are increasingly



participating in self-help groups and awareness programs, which indicates a gradual shift towards greater involvement in socio-economic activities. Older women participate comparatively less in formal economic activities due to health, social responsibilities, and traditional roles.

Educational Status

Education is a key factor influencing women's empowerment. The findings show that a considerable proportion of tribal women still have low educational attainment, with many either illiterate or educated only up to primary level. Limited access to schooling in tribal areas, early marriage, and economic hardship contribute to this condition. However, younger generations show slightly improved educational levels, indicating the positive impact of government educational initiatives. Higher education among tribal women remains limited, which restricts access to better employment opportunities.

Occupational Structure

The occupational pattern reveals that most tribal women depend on agriculture and wage labour for their livelihood. Agricultural labour remains the dominant occupation, followed by small-scale farming and forest-related activities. Only a small number of women are engaged in small businesses or formal employment. This reflects the continued dependence of tribal households on traditional and seasonal sources of income. Lack of skills, limited employment opportunities, and low educational levels further constrain occupational mobility among tribal women.

Income Levels

The income distribution among respondents indicates that a large proportion of tribal households fall into the lower-income category. Most women earn modest incomes through agricultural labour, forest produce collection, or small economic activities. Limited income restricts their ability to access healthcare, education, and financial resources. However, participation in group-based economic activities and government welfare schemes has helped some women improve their financial condition gradually.

Participation in Self-Help Groups

Self-Help Groups play a significant role in promoting financial independence and social awareness among tribal women. The study indicates that many respondents are members of SHGs and actively participate in savings and credit activities. These groups provide opportunities for women to access small loans, start micro-enterprises, and develop leadership skills. Women involved in SHGs often show



higher confidence, improved financial management, and greater participation in community decisions compared to non-members.

Decision-Making Power

Decision-making within the household is an important indicator of empowerment. The findings reveal that many tribal women participate in household decisions, particularly in matters related to children's education, household expenditure, and savings. In several cases, decisions are taken jointly with spouses or family members, reflecting a moderate level of empowerment. However, some women still have limited influence in family decisions due to traditional gender norms and economic dependence. Increasing education, economic opportunities, and awareness programs can further strengthen women's autonomy.

Major Findings of the Study

The present study on the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in Khammam district reveals several important findings based on the field data collected from respondents.

1.Active Age Participation:

The study found that a majority of the respondents belong to the economically productive age group, particularly between 26 and 45 years. Women in this age range are more actively involved in livelihood activities, family responsibilities, and community participation.

2.Low Educational Attainment:

A significant proportion of tribal women possess low levels of education, with many either illiterate or educated only up to the primary level. Limited access to education, early marriage, and socio-economic constraints continue to affect educational advancement among tribal women.

3.Dependence on Traditional Occupations:

Most respondents rely on agriculture, daily wage labour, and forest-based activities as their primary sources of livelihood. Very few women are engaged in formal employment or independent business activities, indicating limited economic diversification.

4.Low Income Levels:

The majority of tribal women earn relatively low monthly incomes. This limited earning capacity affects their living standards and access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and financial resources.



5. Growing Role of Self-Help Groups:

Participation in Self-Help Groups has emerged as an important factor in improving women's financial awareness and confidence. Women who are members of SHGs show greater involvement in savings activities, small economic initiatives, and community programs.

6. Moderate Level of Decision-Making Power:

The study indicates that many tribal women participate in household decision-making, particularly in matters related to family welfare and household expenditure. However, in many cases decisions are still taken jointly with male members, showing a moderate level of empowerment.

7. Improvement in Social Awareness:

Exposure to government programs, local organizations, and SHGs has gradually increased awareness among tribal women regarding education, health, and economic opportunities.

8. Need for Institutional Support:

Despite some progress, tribal women continue to face several socio-economic challenges such as limited employment opportunities, low literacy levels, and restricted access to financial resources. This highlights the need for stronger policy support and development initiatives.

These findings indicate that while progress has been made in improving the socio-economic condition of tribal women, substantial efforts are still required to achieve sustainable empowerment in tribal communities.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study conducted among tribal women in Khammam district, the following suggestions are proposed to improve their socio-economic empowerment:

1. Promoting Education Among Tribal Women:

Government and local authorities should strengthen educational facilities in tribal areas and encourage girls' education through scholarships, hostels, and awareness programs.

2. Skill Development and Employment Opportunities:

Skill training programs in areas such as tailoring, handicrafts, food processing, and small-scale entrepreneurship should be expanded to enhance employment opportunities for tribal women.



3.Strengthening Self-Help Groups (SHGs):

SHGs should be further supported with financial assistance, training, and market linkages so that women can start sustainable income-generating activities.

4.Awareness of Government Welfare Schemes:

Many tribal women are unaware of the various welfare programs available to them. Regular awareness campaigns should be conducted to ensure better utilization of these schemes.

5.Improving Healthcare Facilities:

Access to healthcare services, especially maternal health, nutrition, and anemia prevention programs, should be strengthened in tribal regions.

6.Encouraging Women’s Participation in Decision-Making:

Community-level initiatives should promote women’s participation in family and local governance decisions to enhance their confidence and leadership abilities.

Financial Inclusion:

Access to bank accounts, microcredit facilities, and financial literacy programs should be improved to promote economic independence among tribal women.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the socio-economic conditions and empowerment status of tribal women in Khammam district. The findings indicate that while tribal women actively contribute to household livelihoods through agriculture, wage labour, and forest-related activities, they continue to face several socio-economic challenges such as low education levels, limited income opportunities, and restricted access to resources. However, the growing participation of women in Self-Help Groups and community activities shows positive signs of empowerment and social awareness.

Although gradual improvements are visible, sustained efforts from government agencies, local institutions, and community organizations are essential to enhance education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and financial independence among tribal women. Strengthening these areas can significantly improve their socio-economic status and contribute to inclusive and sustainable rural development.

References

1. Census of India. (2011). Primary census abstract: Scheduled Tribes.
2. Sahal, K. (2023). Status and Main Issues of Tribal Women in India. *Annals of Anthropological Research & Reviews*, 3.
3. Khammam District Administration. (n.d.). Demography.



Publications

United International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (UIJMR)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Multidisciplinary Journal

ISSN: 3048-6726 www.ujmr.in Impact Factor: 6.934 (SJIF) Vol-3, Issue-1 ;Jan, Feb, & Mar, 2026

4. Manna, A. (Year). Title of the article. International Journal of Research and Analysis in Humanities, Volume (Issue). <https://doi.org/10.55544/ijrah.4.1.2>
5. Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. Development and Change.
6. Sen, A. (1999). Freedom. Development, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
7. Xaxa, V. (2017). Tribes and higher education in India. Routledge Handbook of Education in India: Debates, Practices, and Policies, 92.
8. Government of India. (2011). Census of India: Scheduled Tribes Data.
9. NABARD. (2020). Status of Microfinance in India.
10. Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2022). Annual Report.
11. Mayoux, L. (2002). Microfinance and women's empowerment: Rethinking 'best practice'. Development Bulletin, 57(1), 76-80.
12. Government of Telangana. (2021). Tribal Welfare Department Report.
13. Agarwal, B. (2010). Gender and green governance: the political economy of women's presence within and beyond community forestry. Oxford University Press.
14. UNDP. (2020). Women Empowerment and Livelihood Programs.
15. Gupta, J. (2024). Socio-economic status of tribal women in India. International Journal of Social Science & Management Studies, 9(12).
16. Census of India. (2011). District census handbook: Khammam (Series-29, Part XII-B). Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.
17. District Census Handbook: Khammam. (2011). Census of India (Series-29, Part XII-B). Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.