

Human Values and Skill Empowerment for Sustainable Livelihoods: A Study among Tribal Communities in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

This study critically examines the intersection of intrinsic human values and skill empowerment as essential determinants for fostering sustainable livelihoods within the tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh. Utilizing exclusively secondary data sources, comprising peer-reviewed academic research, government reports, NGO assessments, and evaluations of development projects, the paper analyzes how value-oriented paradigms such as inclusiveness, cultural sensitivity, community participation, and ethical engagement underpin the effectiveness of skill development interventions. Findings reveal that integrating human values with livelihood initiatives significantly enhances socio-economic resilience, expands income-generating opportunities, and supports the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems. Concurrently, the study identifies persistent barriers including institutional inadequacies, structural inequalities, and challenges in replicating successful models across heterogeneous tribal contexts. Through synthesizing theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the research argues that sustainable and dignified livelihoods are attainable only when skill empowerment is embedded within value-driven frameworks. The insights presented hold critical implications for policymakers, development agencies, and practitioners aiming to devise holistic, culturally grounded strategies that transcend mere economic objectives to foster inclusive growth and enduring resilience among marginalized tribal populations.

1. Introduction

Madhya Pradesh is known as the "tribal heartland of India." It has the biggest share of Scheduled Tribes in the country. These tribes make up 21.1% of the state's people (Census of India, 2011). Over 15.3 million tribal people live there. Major groups include Gond, Bhil, Baiga, Korcu, Sahariya, Kol, and Bharia. Each group has its own culture and knowledge of nature (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, GoI, 2020).

These communities face many problems. They have been left out in the past. Their literacy rate is low at 50.6%, compared to the state average of 70.6% (Census 2011). Health is poor, jobs are limited, and they suffer from forest loss, moving from homes, and climate change (NITI Aayog, 2018; UNDP, 2021).

Studies and government plans say we must add basic human values to skill programs for tribes. Values like including everyone, sharing responsibility, respecting work, and caring for nature. Programs

in green farming, forest products, crafts, business, and eco-tourism show good results. They boost income, build strength against problems, and protect culture and environment (Planning Commission, 2010; Ministry of Rural Development, 2022).

2. Objective of the Study

- Undertake a rigorous review of secondary literature to elucidate the role of human values in shaping and sustaining livelihood practices among tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh.
- Systematically compile evidence on skill empowerment programs from academic publications, government policies, NGO evaluations, and relevant case studies.
- Identify best practices that effectively integrate human values with vocational training and capacity-building initiatives.
- Foster economic resilience and cultural conservation through the integration of value-driven approaches in skill development.
- Develop evidence-based, policy-relevant recommendations to guide the design and implementation of culturally congruent, value-based, and sustainable development interventions.

3. Review of Literature

Kumar (2025) says India has 705 tribal groups and over 1,700 subgroups per Census 2011. They number 104 million, or 8.6% of the population. Only 10 million live in cities; most are rural in forests and hills. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Gujarat hold 51.5% of all tribes.

Nanjunda (2025) created India's second Tribal Human Development Index using data from 1,255 Karnataka households. It covers health, education, and livelihoods. Tribes like Yarava, Nayaka, and Kuruba lead in rankings, with Bangalore Rural topping districts. Forest tribes lag despite some gains and need urgent policy focus.

Singh (2025) found the Tejaswini program helps tribal women in Madhya Pradesh revive millet farming. Baiga and Gond women grow kodo and kutki millets, once dropped for low profits. Using SHGs, they gain training, business skills, and seed saving. This boosts income, decisions, food security, and sustainable growth.

Das (2024) says skill training is key for tribal youth to get fair jobs amid city growth. This review checks 47 studies on sustainable livelihoods worldwide. It finds research gaps and stresses how skills help youth start businesses and beat challenges.

Debnath (2024) says indigenous knowledge is what tribes learn from nature over generations. It helps in farming, health, and resources. He found sustainable livelihoods use this for better lives and environment. The study looks at Baiga, Bhariya, and Sahariya tribes in Madhya Pradesh for sustainable development.

Singh (2024) found MGNREGA builds jobs and security in tribal areas of Dindhori and Annupur, Madhya Pradesh. The study surveyed 640 homes using numbers and stories. Results show it cuts poverty and boosts livelihoods, with big differences by tribe, age, gender, job, and education.

Tripathy (2024) created a tool to measure livelihood patterns of Indian tribes. Items came from literature reviews and were checked for validity. Tested on 330 people from Baiga, Panika, and Gond groups, it showed good reliability (Cronbach alpha 0.75). Six factors emerged: food/health, culture, religion, assets, finance, and environment.

Shandilya (2023) says tribal groups near mines in India face big problems from being ignored. Rich minerals sit in poor areas like Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh. People deserve mining profits. The paper pushes green jobs to save culture, nature, and boost tribal lives using current rules.

Pandey (2007) says Baiga and Gond tribes in Madhya Pradesh rely heavily on non-timber forest products like those in Dindori, which make up over 60% of Baiga income. These resources meet daily needs and supply pharma industries. Lack of processing knowledge and overharvesting cause depletion, so sustainable use is key.

Debnath (2006) says Madhya Pradesh leads in Joint Forest Management since 1990. Despite rich forests, poverty drives tribals to over-exploit them for survival. The 1995-1999 Forestry Project created jobs, assets, and income options, easing poverty and boosting livelihoods through better forest care.

Sah (2005) says Sah and Shah (2003) found high poverty in Madhya Pradesh's tribal areas. Three-fifths of homes are chronically poor due to population pressure, small lands, droughts, no farm jobs, and moneylender debt traps. State aid and rights awareness are key to help them.

Research Gaps

Despite successes in skill programs like MGNREGA, Tejaswini SHGs, and herbal training, key gaps remain in the literature on human values and sustainable livelihoods for Madhya Pradesh tribes:

- Few studies link values directly to skills: Papers show income gains (e.g., doubled earnings in Patakot, Khare 2022) but rarely test how inclusivity or nature care boosts program success.
- Limited PVTG focus: Baiga, Bhariya, and Sahariya get mention (Debnath 2024), but no deep comparison across all 46 MP PVTGs or scaling barriers.
- No long-term impact data: Short-term wins like millet revival (Singh 2025) lack follow-up on sustainability after 5-10 years.
- Youth and women understudied: Youth (34.8% population, Khond 2020) and women need more on non-farm skills like eco-tourism; most focus on farming/forests.
- Weak integration models: Programs work alone (e.g., MGNREGA vs. SHGs), but no frameworks blend values, indigenous knowledge, and modern training holistically.
- Regional bias: MP-specific studies exist, but no cross-state comparison with Odisha/Jharkhand for best practices.
- Primary data missing: All rely on secondary sources; real tribal voices on value conflicts are absent.

This study fills the gap by synthesizing values-driven skill approaches for MP tribes using comprehensive secondary evidence

4. Research Methodology

Research methodology explains the plan used to do a study. It shows how data was found, checked, and studied. This paper uses only secondary data. That means no new surveys, talks, or visits to tribal areas. All info comes from already published books, papers, reports, and websites.

Reasons for Secondary Data

Primary data consists of fresh info collected first hand, such as asking tribal people questions. It proves useful but requires time, money, and travel. Secondary data comprises information already gathered and shared by others. For this study on Madhya Pradesh tribes, secondary data suits the purpose because it proves fast and covers many years of facts from trusted places like Census 2011 and NITI Aayog reports. Good side: cheap and wide view. Bad side: old data cannot be changed or today's news added.

Detailed Research Procedure

The step-by-step process describes exactly how the study was done. Each step builds on the last one. All steps used secondary data from published sources. No new data was created.

Step 1: Search for Sources

Keywords were entered into search engines and databases. Examples include "tribal skills Madhya Pradesh," "human values sustainable livelihoods tribes," and "MGNREGA tribal impact MP." Over 25 papers and 10 reports from 2005-2025 were found. Sources came from Google Scholar, JSTOR, government sites, and journals. This step took the longest to get a wide range of info.

Step 2: Select Good Sources

Not all found items were used. Sources were picked based on rules: Trusted authors like government (Census 2011) or peer-reviewed journals. Recent dates (mostly 2010-2025). Clear methods, like sample sizes (e.g., 640 homes in Singh 2024). Focus on MP tribes or similar areas. Weak sources, like blogs or very old papers, were skipped. About 35 total sources were chosen after this filter.

Step 3: Read and Take Notes

Full texts were read carefully. Key facts were written down in notes. Categories included: Numbers: Tribal population 15.3 million, literacy 50.6%. Quotes: "Indigenous knowledge helps farming" (Debnath 2024). Program results: Income doubles from herbal training (Khare 2022). Notes were organized by theme in a document. Every source got a summary of 2-3 sentences.

Step 4: Group into Themes

Similar ideas were put together. Main themes emerged: Successes: MGNREGA jobs, millet revival by women SHGs. Values link: Inclusivity and nature care make skills work better. Barriers: Low education, forest loss, landless families. Gaps: Programs not scaled to all PVTGs. This grouping showed patterns across studies. For example, 7 papers mentioned SHGs helping income and culture.

Step 5: Check Facts for Truth

Facts were matched across sources. Examples: Tribal population confirmed in Census 2011 and Kumar (2025). Literacy rates checked in NITI Aayog (2018) vs. UNDP (2021). Conflicts noted, like varying

poverty numbers, and explained. Reliability tests from studies (e.g., Cronbach alpha 0.75 in Tripathy 2024) were highlighted. Wrong or old info was flagged.

Step 6: Mix Findings and Draw Ideas

All themes were combined to answer the main question: Do human values plus skills create better tribal lives? Links were made: Values like sharing boost program success (e.g., Joint Forest Management). Evidence built cases for policy, like more youth training. New ideas formed, such as scaling eco-tourism with tribal knowledge. Final output included abstract, intro, review, findings, and conclusion. This process ensures the study stays fair, full, and based on real evidence from experts. It took weeks but gave a clear big picture without fieldwork.

Data Types Used

Data types refer to the kinds of information analyzed in the study. Two main types were used: numbers data and story data. Both came from secondary sources like reports and papers. No new data was made.

Quantitative Data:

This includes facts that can be counted or measured. Examples: Tribal population makes up 21% of Madhya Pradesh, or 15.3 million people (Census 2011). Literacy rate for tribes stands at 50.6%, much lower than the state average of 70.6%. Income doubles for herbal sellers after skill training like PRK and PRT (Khare 2022). Forest products provide over 60% of Baiga tribe income (Pandey 2007). MGNREGA helped 640 tribal homes with jobs and poverty reduction (Singh 2024). Numbers data shows clear changes, like how programs boost earnings or highlight problems like low education.

Qualitative Data:

This covers ideas, opinions, and descriptions from words. Examples: Quotes on inclusivity: “Programs work better when everyone shares responsibility” from studies on SHGs. Tribal knowledge: “Tribes learn farming and health from nature over generations” (Debnath 2024). Values like nature care: “Respecting work and ecology saves culture during skill training.” Barriers described: Landless families face high risks from poor health and no jobs (Behera 2022). Story data explains why numbers happen, like how values build trust in groups. No computers or math software was needed. Simple reading, comparing, and grouping was done by hand in notes.

Limitations of the Study

- No new data: No surveys or tribal visits; misses real voices from Baiga/Gond groups.
- Old sources: Census 2011 and earlier data skip recent changes.
- Others' work: Errors or small samples (e.g., 69 people) carry over.
- Varying quality: Strong reports mix with weaker old papers.
- Broad focus: Gives big ideas but no village details.
- Untested links: SHGs boost income, but cause-effect unproven.
- English only: Skips Hindi/tribal language views.
- No deep stats: Just grouping, no math models.

5. Findings

Value-based skill programs greatly help tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh. MGNREGA creates jobs and cuts poverty in areas like Dindori, with results varying by tribe, age, and gender (Singh 2024). Tejaswini empowers Baiga and Gond women through SHGs to revive millets, boosting income, food security, and family decisions (Singh 2025). Herbal training doubles earnings for Patalkot vendors (Khare 2022). Forest products provide 60% of Baiga income but face overharvest risks (Pandey 2007). Indigenous knowledge supports sustainable farming and health (Debnath 2024). Yet challenges remain: low literacy (50.6%), landlessness, and poor health access (Behera 2022). Human values like inclusivity and nature care strengthen programs, preserving culture while building economic resilience. Integrating these with skills in eco-tourism and crafts shows best results for PVTGs.

Challenges Identified

Here are the challenges identified:

- **Low Literacy Rates:** Tribal literacy at 50.6% lags behind state average of 70.6% (Census 2011), limiting skill uptake and job options.
- **Poor Health Access:** Forest dwellers face weak health services, raising vulnerability especially for landless families (Behera 2022).
- **Forest Degradation:** Overuse and loss of resources hurt Baiga income (60% from forests) due to poor harvesting knowledge (Pandey 2007).
- **Landlessness:** Many families lack land, blocking farm-based livelihoods and increasing poverty risks (Behera 2022).
- **Limited Program Scale:** Successes like herbal training or SHGs fail to reach all PVTGs across districts (Khare 2022).
- **Structural Inequality:** Mine-rich areas ignore tribes despite resource rights (Shandilya 2023).
- **Weak Stakeholder Role:** Poor official support hampers watershed and community programs (Dash 2016).
- **Debt Traps:** Moneylenders and low off-farm jobs keep chronic poverty high (Sah 2005).

6. Recommendations

Scale Up Proven Programs: Expand MGNREGA, Tejaswini SHGs, and herbal training (PRK/PRT) to all PVTG areas like Dindori and Patalkot for wider income gains.

- **Embed Human Values:** Train officials in inclusivity, cultural respect, and nature care to make skill programs more effective and trusted by tribes.
- **Boost Literacy and Health:** Start mobile schools and clinics in remote forests to raise literacy above 50.6% and cut health gaps.
- **Promote Sustainable Harvest:** Teach green forest use to protect Baiga's 60% forest income and stop over-exploitation.
- **Link to Markets:** Build sales chains for tribal millets, crafts, and NTFPs to double earnings like in sericulture successes.
- **Youth Skill Focus:** Offer eco-tourism, crafts, and digital training for India's 34.8% youth population to create non-farm jobs.

- Stronger Stakeholder Role: Improve official accountability and community leadership in watershed and forest projects.
- Policy for PVTGs: Give land rights, debt relief, and special funds to landless families to break poverty cycles.
- Monitor and Research: Track program impacts yearly and mix primary surveys with secondary data for better results.

7. Conclusion

Madhya Pradesh's tribal communities, forming 21% of the state's population, gain lasting livelihoods when human values like inclusivity and nature care blend with skill programs. Successes such as MGNREGA jobs, Tejaswini SHGs for millet revival, and herbal training show income growth, cultural preservation, and resilience against poverty. Yet challenges like low literacy, forest loss, and landlessness persist.

Value-driven approaches in eco-tourism, crafts, and sustainable farming offer hope for PVTGs like Baiga and Gond. Policymakers should scale proven models, boost education/health, link markets, and empower youth. This path ensures dignified, green development that honors indigenous knowledge. Future efforts must prioritize monitoring and community voices for true equity.

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