

Livelihood Diversification in Eastern Rural India: Problem and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

In the country like India where the occupation has mainly been the dominance of agriculture, livelihood diversification has become remarkable means and opportunities for transforming the living condition of the rural people through thriving the available resources for a long-term consequence on them. The rural areas of eastern India, which have been mostly occupied by the tribal population i.e., Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha have been chosen to conduct this research regarding the problem and prospect of livelihood diversification on the basis of their comparison. The result has enunciated and organized that various antecedents of the problems can be broadly grouped into social, physical, financial, natural and human factors. Thus, in these rural areas, livelihood diversification through on-farm sector become more preferable and suitable rather than off-farm due to their traditional occupational practices and mindset as well as many unconformities that have been acted as a hindrance factor.

Keywords: Livelihood diversification, Tribal Community, Rural development, Eastern rural India.

1. INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic upliftment and livelihood diversification have a great bond of linkage that cannot be achievable separately and/or without mobilizing the available resources and upgradation of livelihood practice. With a view of poverty reduction and economic

growth, the livelihood diversification has gained popularity (World Bank, 2007). In rural area, due to practicing agriculture as the traditional knowledge with the absence of enhancing their subsistence way, it has no capabilities to provide sufficient means of escape from poverty (Abera et al., 2021). The rural people in India have been incurred from a chronic poverty and the stagnating position in a way of socio-economic condition, food security, and many other antecedents instead of providing them the fruitful future through many initiatives from the government and the NGOs. Livelihood diversification has lessened the vulnerability of the poor in terms of food insecurity and livelihood collapse. It widens the people's option to avail more opportunities regarding natural resources management (Ellis & Allison, 2004). Moreover, they allow positive adaptation to changing circumstances (Ellis, 1999).

Livelihood diversification is an applied strategy and instrument for poverty reduction (Gautam & Andersen, 2016). It is a process of practicing the new way of activities to upgrade their standard of living for their survival. Farmers even in a developed countries not only used for risk mitigation but also for enhancing better financial returns (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2009). Diversification is about changing the nature of fulltime occupation than individual or family possessing multiple occupation in the context of 'farm changes' and 'developing

off-farm practice' (Ellis, 2000). Diversification can be classified into off-farm and on-farm (Israr et al., 2014). Different off-farm sector demand different level of investment and offer different returns. The higher returns require higher investment in social, human and financial capital, the poor people are not affording of it (Gautam & Andersen, 2016). In an on-farm sector, farmers have to established an alternative or non-conventional farm enterprise beyond traditional way of mix cropping to attained diversification (Diez et al., 2000).

Therefore, off-farm plays significant role in promoting livelihood than merely traditional farming (O., 2013). Transitioning of traditional to modern farming has specific applicability regarding geographical due to cultural restraint. The livelihood is less diversified for a laborer group while the richer household diversify towards self-earning like agriculture and its allied activities, small business etc., (Khatun & Roy, 2016). So, the lower people availed informal loan due to its simplicity than formal recognized loan led to debt (Datta & Singh, n.d.). Hence, mobilization of off-farm and on-farm resources became more complex and have a long-way of goal for livelihood diversification and sustainability. Livelihood diversification is strongly influenced by its determinants i.e., seasonality, risk, labor market, credit market, asset strategies and coping strategies (Ellis, 2000). Education, household size, ethnicity act as responsible factor for livelihood diversification (Rahut et al., n.d.). Agro-climatic condition and overall socio-economic have strongly determined livelihood diversification (Khatun & Roy, n.d.). The role of market access, quality input and transportation are significant dimension of livelihood diversification (Asmah, 2011). The development initiatives that diversify assets rather than maximizing the quantity of single assets become more successful in livelihood diversification and vulnerability (Martin & Lorenzen, 2016).

1.1 Backgrounds of the study area.

Agriculture have been the backbone of the livelihood and the cornerstone of economic development in India. But, in rural area of eastern India, the practice of subsistence agriculture has dominated the occupation and lesser alternative have been found among them since it requires specific knowledge or resources to support them. These rural areas are mostly occupied by the tribal community. Therefore, in the eastern regions like Orissa, Jharkhand, West Bengal are the states having a large number of Schedule Tribe populations (Paltasingh & Paliwal, 2014). The rural people have a little knowledge of diversifying their livelihood, despite the vast potentiality to diversify the livelihood towards farm and non-farm activities.

Although, many initiatives have been implemented to uplift their socio-economic condition, those rural people have been strongly holding by their traditional knowledge due to lack of human, physical and financial capital. This effects the more limited platform for meaningful generation of income technical information, and they don't have an ability to play a role in higher positions within groups and associations. In this matter, the livelihood is based on seasonality that dictate the times they have to access the production, food, money, opportunities for labour (Casey, 2014).

Inferencing from the previous researcher or scientist that prescribed the dimension, determinants, measures and also the strategy of livelihood diversification, these rural areas have required enormous progression through rational, planned and systematic way of addressing the severe problem and felt needs that will enable them to employ more reliable, situational and geographical based occupation. This research has thrown a light to access a knowledge regarding what kinds of problems that the rural people have been battling with, and the prospect of their livelihood to diversify and ultimately for the rural development.

In the view of attaining livelihood diversification, the following objectives

have been formulated to manifest their situation.

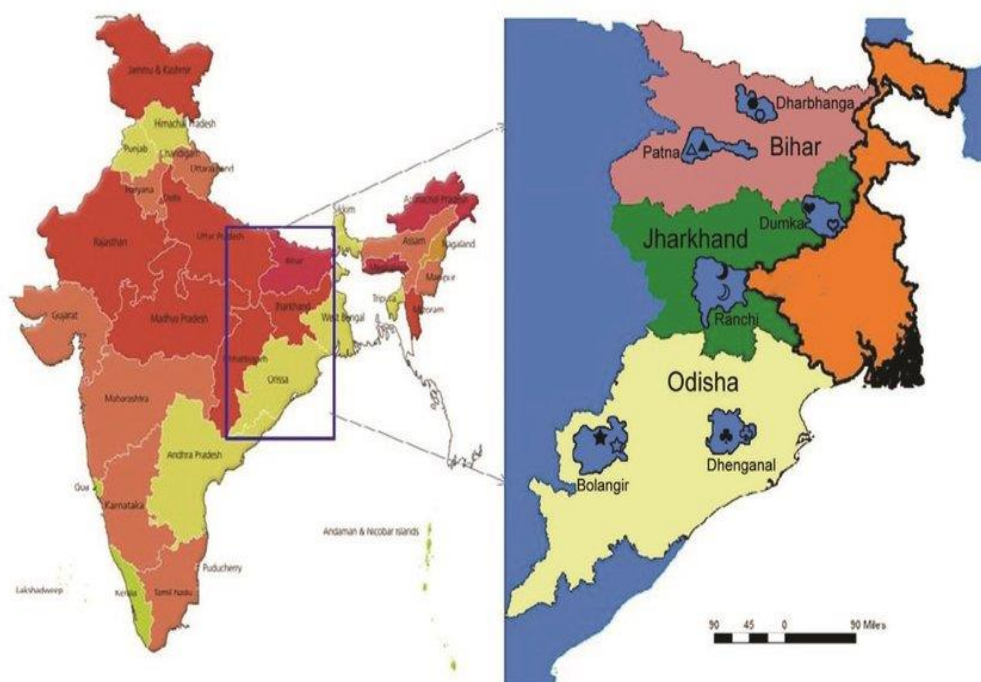
1.2 Objectives

1. To examine the livelihood patterns of rural household
2. To analyze the problem that hinder livelihood diversification
3. To enquire the prospects of diversified income of the household

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Areas

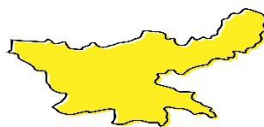
This research was conducted on the area where tribal population are resided in eastern part of rural India i.e., Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha. These areas have more tribal communities as compared to the other parts of India and the socio-economic conditions remain laggard in these rural areas due to internal and external factor (Kumar et al., n.d.). The occupation in the study areas is predominantly agriculture and its allied activities, animal husbandry and collection of trading materials from forest.



Bihar



Jharkhand



Odisha



Thus, the population of 88.71% in Bihar, 75.95% in Jharkhand and 75.95% in Odisha reside in rural areas (Census 2011).

2.2 Types and collection of data.

This type of research is both quantitative and qualitative in nature extensively

conducted using secondary data i.e., their respective state's government records both census and state, published and unpublished literature as well as the concerned websites etc., after a careful investigation and rationally selected the relevant material for this study. The collected data were

classified, tabulated and analyzed using frequency, percentage and the other methods.

2.3 Analysis of Data.

The tabular graphs clearly shows that the livelihood pattern of eastern rural India. While 85.26% practised agriculture as the main sources of livelihood, merely 9.76% in Secondary (industry) and 4.96 were involved in tertiary sector (Services). Due to seasonality and over-dependency of the traditional livelihood practise, the family who have side-income are found less. In the secondary sources, collection of trading materials from forest have

contribute 46.5, it is mainly due to forest-tribal interconnectedness in this region. Also, a person who have no stable occupation that can involve in the task whatever comes to them i.e., Forest, Livestock, Agriculture, Daily Wage Worker secured 35.3%. Livestock (Animal Husbandry) has been found popular among the tribal community of eastern rural India; it has played a vital role in both occupation as well as support system. Most agricultural practise are mainly based on primary source of income, the above 2.8% are those who are engaged with some inconvenience i.e., geographically and infrastructure.

Fig1.1 comparison of their livelihood pattern. As on (Census 2011)

State Cultivators (%)	Agricultural (%)	Household industry workers (%)	Other workers (%)
Bihar	44.7	3.6	26.4
Jharkhand	18.2	3.7	48.8
Odisha	22.6	4.1	42.6

Sources: (Kumar et al., n.d.; Rout, n.d; Census 2011; Chandra Deogharia, 2018)

Fig 1.2 Livelihood Pattern consolidated of the three states. As on 2022.

Sources (main)	Frequency	Percent
Primary (Agriculture)	515	85.26
Secondary (Industry)	59	9.76
Tertiary (Services)	30	4.96
Secondary sources	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	17	2.8
Livestock	93	15.4
Forest	281	46.5
Forest, Livestock, Agriculture, Daily Wage Worker	213	35.3

Sources: (Kumar et al., n.d.; Rout, n.d; Census 2011; Chandra Deogharia, 2018)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The diversification of livelihood can be calculated through its determinants and dimension laid by researcher and scientist. Although, this research has enunciated that many alternatives have been utilized by these rural people merely as a side-income. These rural people have been interested in practicing agriculture as main occupation rather than skilled and knowledge-based occupation. So, switching conventional to enhancing with modern technical application to agricultural practice become more beneficial rather than re-introducing off farm diversification in these areas. In order to use off-farm occupation as

beneficial or dependable as agriculture, it would take a lot of time to make them learn as well as their own belief and conservatism are sometime act as hindrance factor.

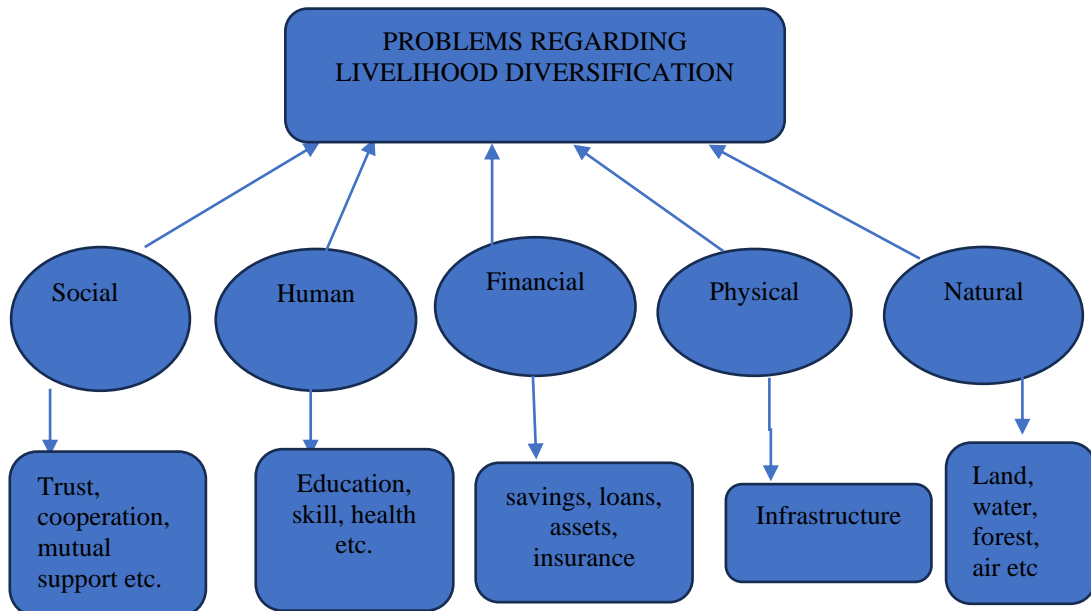
3.1 Problems faced by the rural people to diversify their livelihood.

The problems faced by the rural area are varies from situation to situation, geographical area or within a community etc., Due to these difficulties faced by the rural peoples, the occupation become uncertain and not stable. These different problems hinder the development in the selected areas and make them laggard as compared to other states. The problems can

be broadly subsumed conventionally in the same concept of livelihood capitals that is always use to indicate the development

levels. But these problems have a lot of antecedents in particular situation:

Fig. 1.3 Various problems faced



1. **Social problems:** It concerns about social resources. Connectedness, trust, co-operation, mutual support, collective representation, participation, patronage neighbourhoods, leadership etc. (Kamil and Rashid, 2011). Some alternative occupation requires special consideration as well as geographically and community support. The rural people in these areas have lack of community support or socially related problems since they have been in a limited circle and lack of idol to imitated or to enlighten them.

2. **Human problems:** It refers to education, skill and health. Education helps in enhancing the ability, creativity and systematic skills for accelerating economic activity and development (Choudhary AI, 2015). Education is important not only for human capital enhancement but also reducing cultural misunderstanding (Li et al., 2017). Many alternatives need specific procedure or knowledge. These tribal

community in the eastern states are lowered in human capital i.e., skill, health and education etc., as compared to the other state. The school dropout problem and other social evil have made them laggard in a way of socio-economic development that deeply effects the livelihood opportunity.

3. **Financial problems:** Sources of income; savings, loans, assets, insurance (Buckle 2006). The need of start-up capital is higher to pursue and mobilize the alternative job. The government initiatives seem to turmoiled and ineffective due to the lack of financial capital that is the results of loopholes and corruption. As a matter of facts, unrecognized moneylenders are more rampant since it is very simple than the formal loan system that have resulted them and trap in a debt. So, the sponsored opportunity of alternative job cannot be strengthening its robustness and enhance its resilience due to lack of financial capital confront by them.

4. **Physical problems:** Infrastructure facilities like storage, road, electricity has played an eminent role to maximize the alternative job as agriculture depends mostly on weather. These rural peoples have been suffered many physical problems due to its remoteness. They have faced neglect both in the innovation and renovation of the public infrastructure. So, lack of the support infrastructure resulted more vulnerability to the rural peoples that effects their situation become detrimental day by day.
5. **Natural problems:** It concerns about natural resources stocks like land, water,

forest, air etc. The study areas of eastern rural India i.e., Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha have fall under Agroclimatic zone of India. But, the potentiality of this land has not yet discovered due to the application of scientific knowledge and land distribution, there is a diminished chance for small and fragmented land holders as well as agricultural laborers etc. In the eastern states there is a large share of marginal farmers (70 to 90%). Average size of operational holding of these marginal farmers in Bihar (0.25 ha), Jharkhand (0.41ha) and Orissa (0.57 ha) are too small for making it economically viable for sustaining the livelihood (Kumar et al., n.d.).

Fig 1.4 Land distribution in the eastern states

Eastern states	Percent of marginal farmers (<1ha land holding)	Average land holding of marginal farmers (ha)
Bihar	91.0	0.25
Jharkhand	68.2	0.41
Orissa	72.2	0.57
India	67.0	0.38

Source: (Census 2011), Agriculture Census 2010-11.

Note: Overall average land holding in Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa are 0.39 ha, 1.17 ha and 1.04 ha, respectively.

CONCLUSION

The problems of tribal community in the eastern rural India are more profound and that deeply affected the livelihood diversification. Due to this matter, diversifying livelihood has become in a gloomy state. The eminent problems such as: Road and transportation, poor rural–urban linkage, absence of technical support, landholdings, lack of financial start-up, lack of credit facilities, lack of access to market, inadequate skill training and lack of awareness have made them incapable to perform diversification in these areas. Therefore, on-farm diversification became more preferable than off farm, due to appropriateness with their livelihood pattern and practiced. Thus, emphasis would be given to them as it is conformity with their conditions. The agro-climatic condition of eastern rural India could be more transform with the help of government intervention

both at the central and state level regarding provision of special consideration and assistance that will enable them to minimize the risky ventures and reaching the desired diversification of livelihood goals as well as to get rid from the problem they have been confronts.

Declaration by Authors

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