

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR SELF-RELIANCE AMONG TRIBAL FARM WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between socio-personal characteristics of tribal farm women and their aspirations for self-reliance in Middle Gujarat. The investigation was carried out in four tribal-dominated districts: Dahod, Panchmahals, Chhotaudepur, and Mahisagar. A multistage, purposive, and random sampling technique was employed, resulting in a total sample size of 240 respondents from twenty-four selected villages. The data were collected using a structured and pre-tested interview schedule, and analyzed using percentages and correlation coefficients. Eighteen independent variables were studied, including age, education, farming experience, social media utilization, social participation, family type, occupation, income, material possession, extension participation, information-seeking behavior, scientific orientation, economic motivation, credit orientation, attitudes towards agriculture and allied sectors, self-confidence, and decision-making ability. The findings revealed that ten variables—such as education, farming experience, social media use, occupation, material possession, extension participation, information-seeking behavior, scientific orientation, credit orientation, and attitude towards agriculture—had a positive and significant relationship with aspirations for self-reliance. Furthermore, variables like type of family, economic motivation, attitude towards allied sectors, self-confidence, and decision-making ability demonstrated highly significant correlations, emphasizing their strong influence on the empowerment of tribal women. In contrast, age, social participation, and family income showed no significant correlation, suggesting limited impact on aspirational outcomes. These insights underscore the importance of promoting educational opportunities, digital access, and resource empowerment to enhance self-reliance among tribal farm women, thereby contributing to sustainable and inclusive rural development.

Keywords: aspirations, self-reliance, tribal farm women and socio-personal characteristics

INTRODUCTION

India constitutes about 8.61 per cent (8.97 million) of the tribal population compared to the country's total population (104.28 million) and covers about 15.00 per cent of the country's area. Tribal farm women comprise 47.00 per cent of the total tribal population. As far as the tribal population is concerned, India is the second most populous country, next to Africa. There are 427 tribes in India, subdivided into several sub-tribes and spread all over the country, settled mainly in hilly and forest areas. Gujarat accounts for 8.10 per cent of the country's scheduled tribe population. The tribal population of Gujarat, numbering 89.17 lakh, constitutes 14.80 per cent of the state's population. They are concentrated in the eastern districts, from Mount Abu on the Rajasthan border in the north to the Dahanu district on the Maharashtra border in the south. The Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) area constitutes 18.00 per cent of the state's geographical location. There are 11 major tribes in Gujarat; the largest is Bhil, constituting 47.89 per

cent of the state's tribal population (Anonymous, 2011).

The tribals have different needs, aspirations, attitudes, habits, and values. The development of personal, social, economic and spiritual aspects of tribal farm women is possible only when their needs, aspirations, attitudes, habits and life values are recognized early and appropriately guided. Therefore, in this study, some of these aspects were considered, that would be helpful to the agencies involved in developing the tribal communities. In the context of tribal farm women, aspiration can be understood as the desire or ambition to improve their living conditions, achieve greater socio-economic mobility, and attain personal and community development.

Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture varies greatly from region to region. But regardless of these variations,

women are actively involved in various agricultural activities. (Chandravadia *et al.*, 2020)

For a variety of reasons, agricultural development has been constrained in the tribal dominated areas. It is urgent need to take crucial reform measures in agriculture sector at ground level to make profession of agriculture a profitable venture so that tribal farmers may adopt agriculture as a source of employment. (Bora *et al.*, 2023)

The major areas of women participation including crop production, fisheries farming, value addition, agro-processing, agro-forestry products, marketing of poultry, dairy and other agricultural products in local and informal. Gujarat has achieved rapid growth especially in manufacturing and service sectors, but even though agriculture sector has an important role, because it is the main sources of income of majority of the population. In addition, 63% of the population of Gujarat lives in rural areas and relies on agriculture and agro related rural non farming sector for their livelihood. (Patel, K. M *et al.* 2018) Women constitute a substantial majority of the agricultural workforce and produce most of the food that is consumed locally, which makes them the principal agents of food security and household welfare in rural areas.

OBJECTIVE

To study the relationship between profile of tribal farm women and aspirations for their self-reliance

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in middle Gujarat on viz. tribal districts namely, Dahod, Panchmahals, Chhotaudepur and Mahisagar of Middle Gujarat. Based on the highest number of tribal populations, two talukas were chosen from each district, and three villages were chosen randomly from each selected talukas of three districts. A total of 240 tribal farm women were included in the sample, with 10 randomly chosen from each selected village. Four districts were thus used to choose twenty-four villages. To gather responses, a structured interview schedule was used to collect the data by personally contact method. Ex-post-Facto research design was used in the present study (Kerlinger, 1976). The data were collected through pre-tested Gujarati interview schedule and investigator contacted all the data personally. The data were gathered, processed and analyzed to draw the meaningful conclusion. The statistical tools used for the analysis of the data were percentage, correlation coefficient. Data was analyzed by SPSS software.

Eighteen variables were selected as independent variable and aspirations of tribal farm women for their self-reliance were selected as dependent variable

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relationship between selected characteristics of the tribal farm women and their aspirations for their self - reliance

Table 1 : Relationship between profile of the tribal farm women and their aspirations for their self - reliance (n = 240)

Sr. No.	Independent variables	'r' value
X ₁	Age	-0.015
X ₂	Education	0.162*
X ₃	Farming experience	0.150*
X ₄	Social media utilization	0.163*
X ₅	Social participation	0.106
X ₆	Type of family	0.271**
X ₇	Occupation	0.157*
X ₈	Family annual income	0.072
X ₉	Material possession	0.161*
X ₁₀	Extension participation	0.161*
X ₁₁	Information seeking behavior	0.130*
X ₁₂	Scientific orientation	0.162*
X ₁₃	Economic motivation	0.221**
X ₁₄	Credit orientation	0.158*
X ₁₅	Attitude towards agriculture as an occupation	0.335**
X ₁₆	Attitude towards allied sectors of agriculture as an occupation	0.159*
X ₁₇	Self confidence	0.451**
X ₁₈	Decision making ability	0.379**

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability

Tribal farm women’s aspirations and education have a positive and significant relationship, suggesting that higher education levels increase their awareness, self-confidence, and desire for independence. They are inspired to strive for better livelihoods and social mobility by education, which gives them access to opportunities outside of agriculture as well as improved knowledge and skills. The outcomes align with the research findings of Mali *et al.* (2015), Rani (2016) and Sachan (2016).

Among tribal farm women, there is a positive and significant correlation between farming experience and aspirations, indicating that more agricultural experience boosts their confidence and willingness to raise their standard of living. A tribal woman with years of farming experience, for instance, might learn better crop management practices,

comprehend market demands, and look at ways to boost productivity. She might therefore hope to use present farming practices, launch a small agribusiness, demonstrating how experience develops desires for independence. The outcomes align with the research findings of Rani (2016) and Yadav (2022).

Tribal farm women's aspirations and social media use have a positive and significant association, suggesting that digital platform exposure increases their knowledge, awareness, and drive for independence. A tribal woman, for instance, can use social media to learn about government programs, better farming methods, and the success stories of other female entrepreneurs. This information can encourage her to start a small business, adopt better agricultural practices, or look for new sources of income in order to enhance her standard of living. The outcomes align with the research findings of Mali *et al.* (2015), Rani (2016) and Amar (2017).

The positive and significant relationship between occupation and aspirations among tribal farm women indicates that engagement in diverse income-generating activities enhances their confidence and desire for self-reliance. For example, a tribal woman involved in both farming and wage labour may recognize the benefits of financial independence, motivating her to adopt better agricultural practices, invest in skill development, or explore small business opportunities for a more secure future. The outcomes align with the research findings of Mali *et al.* (2015) and Amar (2017).

The positive and significant relationship between material possession and aspirations among tribal farm women suggests that better access to resources enhances their confidence and motivation for self-reliance. For example, a tribal woman who owns agricultural tools, livestock, or a mobile phone may feel more empowered to improve her farming practices, seek new income opportunities, or invest in her family's education, ultimately aspiring for a better quality of life. The outcomes align with the research finding of Rani (2016).

The positive and significant relationship between extension participation and aspirations among tribal farm women suggests that exposure to extension activities enhances their knowledge, skills, and motivation for self-reliance. For example, a tribal woman attending agricultural training programs or self-help group meetings may learn improved farming techniques, financial management, and government schemes, inspiring her to adopt modern practices. The outcomes align with the research finding of Rani (2016).

The positive and significant association between tribal farm women's information-seeking behaviour and

their aspirations for self-reliance can be attributed to their increasing exposure to agricultural knowledge, market trends, and livelihood opportunities through various formal and informal information sources. For example, tribal women who actively seek information on improved farming techniques, government schemes, and skill-based training programs are more likely to develop aspirations for self-sufficiency, as access to relevant knowledge empowers them to make informed decisions and enhance their socio-economic status. The outcomes align with the research finding of Yadav (2022).

The positive and significant association between tribal farm women's scientific orientation and their aspirations for self-reliance. Tribal women who embrace scientific methods such as soil testing, high-yield crop varieties, and integrated pest management are more likely to aspire for self-sufficiency, as their enhanced problem-solving ability and confidence in modern techniques encourage greater economic independence and resource optimization. The outcomes align with the research finding of Rani (2016).

The positive and significant association between tribal farm women's credit orientation and their aspirations for self-reliance. It can be attributed to their recognition of credit as a crucial resource for improving agricultural productivity and livelihood opportunities. For example, tribal women who actively seek loans from self-help groups, cooperatives, or government schemes to invest in better seeds, farm equipment, or small enterprises are more likely to aspire for self-sufficiency, as access to financial resources empowers them to expand their income-generating activities and achieve economic independence. No one finding is supported by this result.

The positive and significant association between tribal farm women's attitude towards allied sectors of agriculture as an occupation and their aspirations for self-reliance. It can be attributed to their recognition of livestock rearing, poultry, fisheries, and other allied activities as viable sources of income and livelihood security. For example, tribal women who actively engage in dairy farming, beekeeping, or backyard poultry farming are more likely to aspire for self-sufficiency, as these allied activities provide additional income streams, reduce dependence on crop farming, and enhance overall economic resilience. No one finding is supported by this result.

The positive and highly significant relationship between family type and aspirations among tribal farm women suggests that family structure influences their motivation for self-reliance. For example, women from nuclear families may have greater decision-making power

and responsibility for household income, encouraging them to seek better livelihood opportunities, whereas those in joint families may receive support, guidance, and exposure to diverse experiences that inspire higher aspirations for economic and social growth.

The positive and highly significant association between tribal farm women's economic motivation and their aspirations for self-reliance can be attributed to their strong desire to enhance income, improve financial stability, and secure a better future for their families. For example, tribal women who actively engage in income-generating activities such as vegetable cultivation, poultry farming, or handicrafts are more likely to aspire for self-sufficiency, as their motivation to achieve higher earnings drives them to adopt new skills, seek market opportunities, and make strategic economic decisions. The outcomes align with the research findings of Rani (2016) and Yadav (2022).

The positive and highly significant association between tribal farm women's attitude towards agriculture as an occupation and their aspirations for self-reliance can be attributed to their belief in farming as a sustainable and profitable livelihood option. For example, tribal women who perceive agriculture as a reliable source of income and actively engage in improved farming techniques, organic cultivation, or agri-based enterprises are more likely to aspire for self-sufficiency, as their commitment to agriculture enhances their economic stability and long-term livelihood security. No one finding is supported by this result.

The positive and highly significant association between tribal farm women's self-confidence and their aspirations for self-reliance can be attributed to their belief in their own abilities to make independent decisions and overcome challenges in agriculture and livelihood activities. For example, tribal women who confidently adopt new farming techniques, start small agribusinesses, or participate in leadership roles within self-help groups are more likely to aspire for self-sufficiency, as their strong self-belief motivates them to take risks, seize opportunities, and work towards economic and social empowerment. No one finding is supported by this result.

The positive and highly significant association between tribal farm women's decision-making ability and their aspirations for self-reliance can be attributed to their growing role in making independent choices regarding agricultural practices, resource allocation, and household finances. For example, tribal women who actively decide on crop selection, marketing strategies, or investment in farm inputs are more likely to aspire for self-sufficiency, as their ability to make informed and confident decisions empowers

them to optimize resources, enhance productivity, and achieve economic stability. The finding is partially supported by the research findings of Sachan (2016); Sunil and Vinaya (2016); Patel et al. (2018); Yadav (2022); Nyamasoka et al. (2024); Bharath et al. (2024); Dey et al. (2025); Saifuddin et al. (2025)

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that several socio-personal factors significantly influence the aspirations for self-reliance among tribal farm women in Middle Gujarat. Key variables such as education, farming experience, social media use, occupation, material possession, extension participation, and credit orientation positively impact their motivation and ability to become self-reliant. Additionally, variables like economic motivation, scientific orientation, decision-making ability, and self-confidence were found to be highly significant, indicating their crucial role in empowering tribal women. In contrast, age, social participation, and family income showed no significant effect. These findings suggest that focused interventions in education, digital literacy, extension services, and access to resources are essential to strengthen the self-reliance of tribal farm women and promote inclusive rural development.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- (1) Promote education and digital literacy :** Strengthening educational opportunities and access to digital platforms for tribal farm women can enhance their aspirations, self-confidence, and self-reliance.
- (2) Strengthen extension and resource support :** Tailored extension services, credit access, and training in scientific farming practices should be prioritized to empower tribal women and ensure inclusive rural development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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