

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROPENSITY: A STUDY ON THE ADIVASI ENTREPRENEURS IN ASSAM

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Abstract

Several social scientists have extended entrepreneurship to be the key variable that links the sociocultural milieu with economic development. Entrepreneurship development is seen as a way to solve the imbalances, particularly in a rural society. Realising the significance of entrepreneurship in economic development, the process would not stand strong if it is not taken up by individuals from backward communities (tribes). Adivasis have been undergoing many changes whose consequences and implications have been seriously misunderstood. Against all odds, a change is being observed where the Adivasi society is enhancing its acceptability towards the creation of an enterprise. With this observation, the study aims to determine the degree of inclination towards entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial propensity) among the Adivasis of Assam, and in the process examines the socio-economic profile that motivates them to plunge into the field of entrepreneurship. The study is based on a semi-structured interview with 120 Adivasi entrepreneurs spread across the tea estates, villages and towns of Dibrugarh, Sonitpur, Tinsukia and Udalguri districts of Assam. The results suggest that the entrepreneurs possess minimum qualifications which limit their employment opportunities. Despite a few opportunities, they willingly took up entrepreneurship with a strong pull motivation. Further, the entrepreneurs display high entrepreneurial propensity with a strong disposition of personal resourcefulness.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Propensity, Adivasi.

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Introduction

A wide variety of literature has recognised entrepreneurial development not only as a means to solve the problem of economic development but also as a way to address unemployment and unbalanced area development. Entrepreneurial development depends on an individual's intention and initiative to create a viable business and a number of factors intrude into the decision-making process. Very often, entrepreneurship is defined by the attributes related to the personality of an entrepreneur shaped socially and psychologically.

The literature depicts a certain group of people in India as entrepreneurial communities, such as Marwaris, Gujratis and Bengalis, who with their entrepreneurial activities climbed the economic ladder (Kalmins & Chung, 2006; Iyer & Schoar, 2008; Gupta, n.d.). In the light of developing an unbalanced area, an attempt has been made to study a group of people called Adivasis (Munda, Oraon, Kharia and Santhal tribes), who are economically backward and comprise a significant part of the population of Assam as tea plantation labour. They were originally brought to Assam by the British from other parts of India towards the middle of the 19th century as indentured workers. They worked as bonded labours in the tea gardens of Assam. After more than a century, it is observed that they are conscious, educated and showing some entrepreneurial activities by taking up businesses in rural areas. So, an attempt has been made to contribute to the literature of entrepreneurship, considering a backward community within India, through this study.

The study aims to measure the entrepreneurial propensity of Adivasi entrepreneurs and in the process, examines the socio-economic profile. It also tries to understand their motives to plunge into entrepreneurship.

Brief Overview of Adivasis in Assam

The history of Adivasis in Assam is often related to the history of tea gardens. But evidence shows that Adivasis are connected to North-East

India even before the establishment of tea industry in Assam. The history of Adivasis originates from the Kolarian aborigines of India. The Kolarian aborigines of India comprise more than a dozen tribes with the Mundas, Santhals, Hos and Khasis being the dominant ones. The Adivasis including Munda, Oraon, Santhal, Ho, Kharia and many more are the indigenous tribes of India. Ancient Sanskrit works suggest that the Mundas and other cognate tribes occupied north India before the forefathers of Aryans entered the country. When the Aryans began to enter India through the north-western passes, tribes like Mundas and Khasis could not resist the invaders and migrated eastwards and settled in Assam. It is even perceived by historians that since Khasis and Mundas were living together in the Northeast, their culture is closely related; for instance, they would erect a stone monument in the name of their ancestors. Further, the literature finds similarities in vocabulary, grammar and principles of language building between Mundari and Khasi. For example, Khasis were not cultivators, and therefore Mundas called them 'Kasi' which in Mundari means 'not ploughing' (Ka meaning not and Si meaning ploughing). These shreds of evidence point to the fact that Adivasis are the oldest settlers of Assam (Roy, 1912).

Assam came under the East India Company on 24th February 1826, through the Treaty of Yandabo which was a peace treaty signed by Gen. Archibald Campbell from the British side and the Governor of Legaing Maha Min Hla Kyaw Htin from the Burmese side. Adivasis from Central India (Chotanagpur, Santhal Parganas and Madhya Pradesh) were brought as slaves to the tea plantation of Assam by the British ruler (Chatterjee & Gupta, 1981; Bhowmik, 1985; Palatty, 2006). This continued till tea production became the backbone of the economy of Assam. However, the two major factors that contributed to the migration of Adivasis to Assam during British rule can be attributed to the following: Firstly, the tea industry in Assam was growing at a rapid rate, and hence there was a demand for labour. The tea planters appointed 'Arkatis' (agents) to recruit labours (Chatterjee & Gupta, 1981) and as a result, large

numbers of Adivasis were sent to various places, including Assam. Secondly, the introduction of the Permanent Settlement (1793) deprived the Adivasis of their land. The continuous loss of land led to tribal uprisings that launched a series of revolts against British Rule (Shukla, 2011) and this has further contributed to the cause of Adivasis in Assam. But it should be noted that it was a forced migration for building the tea industry of Assam.

Today Adivasis constitute about 20 per cent of Assam's population of nearly 3.12 crore, with a majority of them living in tea gardens. Economically these people are poor, yet their contribution towards the economic growth of Assam, particularly to the tea industry, is immense. Even after many generations of settling in Assam, the Adivasis are still living a subsistence life and are treated as low-class citizens, unlike their fellow beings living in the States like Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Tripura. Being trapped in the tea gardens within the feudalistic line, which is just incompatible with the modern day where new consciousness of human development, and new expressions in the declarations of human and women's rights protect the rights of the indigenous and marginalised groups, we see the demands for higher wages, bonus, better working and living conditions, better educational and medical facilities by the Adivasi workers. These are leading to strikes, lockouts, etc., which are serious indications of incompatibility. Moreover, the modern generation feels free, untied and unwilling to work for the same plantation for which their ancestors worked. On a general observation, we can doubtlessly say that events of strikes, lockouts, considering oneself free, etc., by the Adivasi workers are alarming and progressively on the rise. Perhaps, a systematic study and documentation would reveal a better picture of Adivasis in Assam in general, and their entrepreneurial propensity in particular, which can be seen as an instrument to unshackle and rid them of their poor socio-economic conditions.

Literature Review

Different aspects of entrepreneurship play

diverse roles in enhancing and increasing our understanding of entrepreneurship across the world. The review of literature concentrates on the effects of a few variables that contribute to the emergence of an entrepreneur.

Gender is an important determinant which influences the propensity towards entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial propensity differs across gender which is shaped by social, cultural, environmental and other personal factors. Waldinger & Gilbertson (1994) studied immigrants' progress in the U.S. which reveals that women have lower occupational ranking than men. While determining the intra and inter group differences in entrepreneurship by Fernandez & Kim (1998), it was found that male immigrants are proportionally more likely to be engaged in self-employed small businesses than females. The same is concluded by Li (2001). On the other hand, Hammarstedt (2004) statistically proves his hypothesis that self-employment is higher for men than women as the latter has the responsibility for the family and children. Contradictory to the above findings, entrepreneurship becomes a way for the Black women of the Mid-Atlantic United States to minimise the gender discrimination faced by them as paid workers (Harvey, 2005). This indicates the inherent difference in the mindset across gender as suggested by Minniti & Nardone (2007) that if women possess the skills and knowledge to engage in entrepreneurship and have a strong belief in themselves to be successful, they are more likely to start their own business. Thus, males and females have different perspectives on entrepreneurship.

Some literature depicts the importance of education in entrepreneurship. Individual across the world converts their educational attainments into occupational prestige which often leads to entrepreneurship. Koo (1976), while conducting research in a Korean city, found that entrepreneurship is associated with high status in society, and individuals who underwent formal education enters into entrepreneurship given the higher earnings. In fact, an educated entrepreneur is in a better state to assess environmental

opportunities and make his/her independent judgment and appraisal compared to an uneducated person (Oommen, 1981). This is apparent from the study of Rees & Shah (1986), which states that education has a greater impact on the earnings of employees and also raises the probability of self-employment. In the same line, Borjas (1986) indicates that education has a positive impact on the rate of entrepreneurship. With regard to entrepreneurial propensity, Li (2001) identify that respondents with a higher level of education along with professional qualification (Srivastava, 2008) display more inclination towards self-employment for both males and females.

However, contradictory to the above findings, Fernandez & Kim (1998), in search for intra and inter group differences in entrepreneurship rates of four groups of Asian immigrants (Koreans, Chinese, Asian Indians, and Vietnamese), asserts that in general, 90 per cent of the post-college graduates are in white-collar occupation and the non-college graduates are employed in low skilled manual work. On the other hand, Asian Indian non-college graduate immigrants are most likely to take up entrepreneurship than post-college graduate immigrants. This indicates that college and university education lowers the self-employment rate (Hammarstedt, 2004; Levenburg & Schwarz, 2008) and that it does not play a significant role in entrepreneurial success (Panda, 2000; Panda, 2002) owing to the fact that highly educated have the most advantage in occupational opportunities outside self-employment.

Entrepreneurship is mostly viewed from and dominated by an economic perspective. However, McClelland's contribution towards the theory of entrepreneurship by explaining it from the psychological perspective is remarkable. McClelland argued that a society's economic growth depends on a psychological motive called 'need for achievement' ('n' achievement). But a study on the McClelland's theory proves that 'n' achievement alone does not lead to society's growth (Mazur & Rosa, 1977). This provides evidence that entrepreneurs are not motivated by a single motive but by multiple causes. Both males

and females are primarily motivated by autonomy, achievement, desire for job satisfaction, need for material incentives and other non-economic rewards (Cromie, 1987; Mitchell, 2004).

Considering the Indian scenario, where the caste system prevails, both the upper caste and the lower caste entrepreneurs are motivated by the need for achievement and power. A comparative study between two subcultures (caste groups) within a community in West Bengal provides evidence that the lower caste (Mahisyas) had taken up entrepreneurship in order to obtain the characteristics of the high caste and that exposure and high cultures of the upper caste tend to be powerful indicators of entrepreneurship for Mahisyas (Nandy, 1973). Obtaining the characteristics of high castes by the Scheduled Castes was also seen as a motivating factor for innovations in Punjab (Bal & Judge, 2010). Apart from this, to be own boss, putting innovative ideas into practice, non-business education and determination prove to be the trigger to entrepreneurial intention (Bhandari, 2006). Khanka (2009) finds economic motive, desire for independence and keeping the family business alive as the motivating factor among Assamese entrepreneurs. These show that even in India people have multiple motives to take up entrepreneurship.

Research Methodology

A survey was designed through which primary data was generated to build a database. Adivasi entrepreneurs (individuals who have already manifested their entrepreneurial propensity by establishing an enterprise) were regarded as the source of information to capture the entrepreneurial propensity, which is conceptually an inclination or tendency or readiness to take up entrepreneurship. It should be noted that the entrepreneurs who have started their enterprises themselves and have a live business establishment (manufacturing, trading or service) in the study area were taken into consideration. Thus, the inherited businesses were excluded from the study. Individuals belonging to

Munda, Oraon, Kharia and Santhal tribes only were considered to be Adivasis in the study. The survey was conducted in Dibrugarh, Sonitpur, Tinsukia and Udalguri districts covering different areas (tea estates, villages and towns) of Assam. The details of the survey are described hereunder.

Sampling Unit: An entrepreneur whose enterprise satisfies the following two characteristics was regarded as the sampling unit.

- i. The enterprise promoted and managed by an Adivasi entrepreneur (Mundas, Santhals, Oraons and Kharia tribes only), who is involved in all stages of the enterprise life cycle.
- ii. The enterprise existing for a minimum period of two years (demonstrating some sort of success).

Data Collection Design: The data was collected with the help of a schedule (semi-structured) which contained two parts. The first part covers the demographic and socio-economic aspects of the sample entrepreneurs and the second part is related to the measurement of entrepreneurial propensity, which is based on a five-point Likert scale designed by the researcher following the integrated behavioural framework discussed by Gartner, (1988) and Balakrishnan, Gopakumar and Kanungo (1998). This framework is based on five key elements: personal resourcefulness (Mishra & Kumar, 2000), achievement orientation (McClelland, 1961; Shaver & Scott, 1991; Thomas & Muller, 2000), strategic vision (Mitton, 1989; Kuratko & Hodgetts, 1989; Finlay, 1994), opportunity seeking (Leibenstein, 1968) and innovativeness (Schumpeter, 1949). Each of the mentioned dimensions contained six statements (positive and negative) to which the respondents had to specify their degree of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric strongly agree – strongly disagree scale.

For the study, 40 samples were collected from each area (tea estates, villages and towns) with a total of 120 samples (30 from each district). The researcher interviewed all the sample entrepreneurs and obtained their responses on the

schedule. The interviews lasted for more than an hour. The sample entrepreneurs were selected through snowball sampling which was purposive in nature.

Analysis of Data: To get accurate data, the scores of the negative statements were reversed. Further, to determine the minimum and the maximum length of the five-point Likert-type scale, the traditional method was used. Thus, 1 to 1.80 (strongly disagree) represents 'Very Low propensity'; 1.81 to 2.60 (disagree) 'Low propensity'; 2.61 to 3.40 (undecided) 'Moderate propensity'; 3.41 to 4.20 (agree) 'High propensity' and 4.21 to 5 (strongly agree) 'Very high propensity'. The mean scores of the respondents were computed and the results were based on the frequencies of the score.

Findings

The findings of the study are divided into two parts. The first part provides a brief profile of the Adivasi entrepreneurs and discusses the socio-economic aspects that motivate them whereas the second part measures their entrepreneurial propensity.

Gender has been playing a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurship. The perspective of male entrepreneurs differs from that of female entrepreneurs, and indeed there is a difference in the propensity to start a business across gender. Consistent with the findings of the literature, this study also reveals that the proportion of male entrepreneurs (74 per cent) is more compared to their female counterparts (26 per cent) as can be seen in Table 1. Though female entrepreneur covers only one-fourth of the population, it can be asserted that it is not negligible and they are breaking the stereotypes and coming up with new business ideas and embracing self-employment for their sustainability. The female entrepreneurs viewed entrepreneurship as an activity where they can well balance their work with family responsibilities and an important means to walk out of poverty whereas, for male counterparts, it was more about their risk-taking ability and providing financial security to the family.

Table 1*Profile of the Entrepreneurs*

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	89	74
Female	31	26
Total	120	100

Table 2*Educational Background of the Entrepreneurs*

Qualification	Number	Percentage
Illiterate	7	6
Below HSLC	44	37
HSLC	12	10
HS	31	26
Graduate	22	18
Post Graduate	4	3
Total	120	100

Professional training/qualification		
Yes	32	27
No	88	73
Total	120	100

With regard to education, the findings of this study align with the studies that depict the negative impact of qualification on entrepreneurship. Details of the statistical profile presented in Table 2 indicate that the majority of the entrepreneurs (37 per cent) could not complete their school leaving examination. A large part of the population - 88 entrepreneurs - did not possess any professional qualification and only 27 per cent had some technical qualification in their field. This, in fact, supports the notion that the higher the education, the lower the rate of entrepreneurship and vice-versa. The background of these entrepreneurs is almost similar, particularly in the case of tea estates and villages where the educational facilities are very poor. In the case of the tea estates, the quality of education is extremely poor with a limited

number of schools operating only at the primary level. As such acquiring primary education, the respondents were forced to drop out of schools either because of poor economic conditions or lack of proper access to higher secondary schools and colleges. As a result, the study reveals that 38 per cent of the tea estate and 50 per cent of the village entrepreneurs possess primary education only. This leaves limited options to earn and less exposure to the respondents compared to their urban counterparts. Apart from the environmental conditions, family background also speaks a lot about the economic conditions owing to which the entrepreneurs failed to achieve higher education. Table 3 indicates that 47 per cent of the respondents' parents were daily wage earners living hand to mouth. The stark reality was that

more children in the family was seen as a means for additional earnings rather than providing them with a better education. It should be noted that the roots of the entrepreneurs can be found in tea estates and villages of Assam. So, the childhood experiences of the entrepreneurs residing in the towns are not different from that of the rural areas.

The social and economic constraints that the respondents were historically facing changed their mindset significantly and shifted their attention towards entrepreneurship. Table 3 depicts that

among the parents of the entrepreneurs, 56 (47 per cent) were labours, 38 (31 per cent) were agriculturists and 19 (16 per cent) were engaged in services, which indicates a shift from the existing occupation of the family. The respondents chose entrepreneurship which was a new phenomenon and different from the traditional occupation of the family. But why there is a shift from the traditional occupation? This can be better explained with the help of Table 4.

Table 3

Family Background of the Entrepreneurs

Parents occupation	Number	Percentage
Agriculturist (farmer)	38	31
Business	7	6
Service	19	16
Others (daily wage earners)	56	47
Total	120	100

As the literature describes rural entrepreneurship, it is expected that it would be the last resort for the entrepreneurs to survive or earn for the family imposing a strong push into entrepreneurship. A glance at Table 4 indicates that the majority (36 per cent) of the entrepreneurs willingly took up entrepreneurship as described in the entrepreneurship literature in general. Though the entrepreneurs were willingly motivated to embrace entrepreneurship, the main triggers were the class inequalities strongly prevalent in the society and the oppression that relegate the Adivasis to the bottom of the labour queue which can be traced back into the history of Adivasis. These respondents needed to break the traditional tag of farmers and particularly 'baganiya' (workers of tea gardens) which possess a low status in Assamese society. These entrepreneurs wanted to shed the tag and they jumped into

entrepreneurship, expressing their unwillingness to be a part of the tea plantation industry. This feeling was expressed by almost all the entrepreneurs residing in three areas because Adivasis in Assam are often related to the tea gardens and labelled as 'Ex-Tea Tribes' rather than Munda, Oraon, Kharia and Santhal tribes. The withdrawal of social and economic status, in fact, became a propelling factor to plunge into entrepreneurship. Without defying the findings of the existing literature, this study also confirms that 33 per cent of the entrepreneurs with no other options in hand, accepted this occupation for their livelihood. Twelve per cent of the entrepreneurs took it as an independent affair where they are the boss and could exercise freedom and flexibility. Overall, it views that 58 per cent of the entrepreneurs were pulled into entrepreneurship, slightly more than the push motivation.

Table 4*Reasons for Starting the Enterprise*

Reasons	Number	Percentage
Independence	14	12
Saw an opportunity	10	8
Willingness	43	36
Unemployment	8	7
Livelihood	41	33
Dissatisfied with the previous job	2	2
Retired and wanted to do something	2	2
Total	120	100
Motivational Factor		
Push	51	42
Pull	69	58
Total	120	100

The propensity of being an entrepreneur depends more on personal traits rather than being a part of an entrepreneurial community as depicted in Table 4, where willingness was the main motivation of these entrepreneurs without neglecting the push factors. In most of the inherited businesses, we find that the same business is taken over from generation to generation. As such, the next generation lacks the struggles and risks involved at the initial stage of starting a business (arrangement of funds, resources, market, etc.) which is an essential feature of being an entrepreneur. However, most of the entrepreneurs viewed that believing in themselves and having the self-confidence that 'I can and will do this', helped them to overcome many obstacles in business as well as in life. Historically poor in economic conditions, majority of these entrepreneurs had no money to start their enterprises. They worked as labour either in the tea plantation industry or in other shops and workshops, and as salaried

workers in other institutions. They believed in their hard work and risk-taking ability and as a result, the study finds that the majority of the entrepreneurs started the enterprise with their savings (43 per cent), as shown in Table 5. Of them, 22 per cent received their family support to start an enterprise which indicates the positive attitude of the family towards entrepreneurship whereas 17.5 per cent took loans from their relatives, friends, local moneylenders, SHGs, NGOs and banks. There was hardly any entrepreneur who benefited from government schemes like the Mudra loan that involved too much paperwork. In fact, the entrepreneurs were not much aware of the government schemes meant for them. This also indicates that entrepreneurs did not want to engage in time-consuming activities to acquire funds for their enterprises. They prefer easy access and hence, the local moneylenders play a crucial role in financing the entrepreneurs rather than the formal financial institutions, particularly in rural areas.

Table 5*Financial Arrangement by the Entrepreneurs to Start an Enterprise*

Support	Number	Percentage
Own savings	52	43
Family	26	22
Loan	21	17.5
Loan & savings	21	17.5
Total	120	100

Table 6 gives the distribution of the type of enterprise. About 57 per cent of the enterprises were engaged in the service sector which mostly involved schools, hostels, restaurants, beauty parlours and tailoring shops. About 39 per cent of the entrepreneurs were into the trade of fast-

moving consumer goods and the manufacturing sector was almost negligible with about only 4 per cent involving weaving and fabrication. It should be noted that these are micro-enterprises with minimum investment.

Table 6*Type of Enterprise*

Type	Number	Percentage
Service	68	57
Trading	47	39
Manufacturing	5	4
Total	120	100

However, demographic, economic, sociocultural, psychological, political and legal factors shape entrepreneurial propensity. We cannot discuss every aspect at a single point of time but each aspect has a strong influence on entrepreneurship, which varies from time to time and place to place. The socio-economic and motivational aspects discussed above have influenced the entrepreneurial propensity of Adivasi entrepreneurs to some extent.

Entrepreneurial Propensity

In this study, entrepreneurial propensity refers to the degree to which an individual is inclined to entrepreneurship. Several other factors may contribute to the entrepreneurial propensity, but this study stresses the five dimensions, namely Personal Resourcefulness, Achievement

Orientation, Strategic Vision, Opportunity Seeking and Innovativeness which overall reflect the entrepreneurial propensity. Personal resourcefulness, in fact, stresses the individual initiative to go beyond the existing way of life, breaking the stationary process. Achievement orientation refers to the assumption of a high degree of personal responsibility with challenging and realistic goals and working with concrete feedback. The strategic vision indicates the future-oriented goal-setting behaviour which includes having a clear perception of environmental opportunities and constraints and finding unusual from the usual. It also bears a strong leadership behaviour. However, opportunity seeking is the stage where an individual brings his initiative, challenging and realistic goals, and vision together in force and directs it towards realising value in a

market environment. Further, when a new enterprise (product, market, market combination, method of production) is created and is enabled to gain a competitive advantage in the market, it is termed as innovation.

As we look into the mean scores of each of these dimensions (Table 7), it is found that the propensity of the entrepreneurs in the entire dimension is high. Perhaps, in the context of the Adivasi entrepreneurs, the disposition in personal resourcefulness is more with a mean score of 3.93 which is obvious because they valued their hard work, self-confidence and willingness to take risk and start an enterprise. They have been continuously displaying personal resourcefulness in various decisions of initiating a business. In other words, many people possess the idea of creating a new business, but that exists only in their mind. Transforming this idea into reality is the hardest part owing to many internal and external factors as an individual has many roles to play in his daily life and he/she has to balance everything. A shift in his/

her position is a major decision which takes a lot of courage and strong determination. At this stage, an entrepreneur has to overcome all the hurdles to convert his ideas into reality. This is the place where personal resourcefulness plays a significant role. These entrepreneurs prove their resourcefulness with a shift from the traditional occupation of the family and their motives to start an enterprise. On the other hand, the achievement orientation mean score is 3.58, indicating the second-highest score among the dimensions. The entrepreneurs were desperate to improve their social and economic status, which was a strong indication to climb and achieve. The inclination of the entrepreneurs toward strategic vision was low with a mean score of 3.46 and innovation was least (3.44 mean score) compared to other dimensions of the study. The main reasons that contribute to this are limited educational facilities and lack of exposure, which usually enable an individual to better assess the environmental constraints and opportunities as the literature confirms.

Table 7

Propensity in Each Dimension

Dimensions	Mean scores
Personal Resourcefulness	3.93
Achievement Orientation	3.58
Strategic Vision	3.46
Opportunity Seeking	3.49
Innovativeness	3.44

Table 8

Entrepreneurial Propensity of the Adivasi Entrepreneurs

Mean scores	Propensity	Number	Percentage
1 – 1.80	Very Low	----	----
1.81 – 2.60	Low	----	----
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	37	31
3.41 – 4.20	High	79	66
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	4	3
Total		120	100

The results given in Table 8 are based on the frequency method. Despite low inclination in a few dimensions, it reflects that the entrepreneurial propensity among Adivasi entrepreneurs is not low. It ranges from moderate to very high. Overall, about 31 per cent of the entrepreneurs have moderate entrepreneurial propensity (2.61 – 3.40 mean score). But the majority of the population, i.e., about 66 per cent of the Adivasi entrepreneurs, displays high entrepreneurial propensity with the mean scores ranging from 3.41 to 4.20. On the other hand, only 3 per cent of entrepreneurs display very high entrepreneurial propensity. Thus, the study indicates that the entrepreneurial propensity of Adivasi entrepreneurs is high.

Conclusion

The study provides a brief profile of the Adivasi entrepreneurs and demonstrates the various socio-economic aspects that contribute to entrepreneurial propensity. Entrepreneurs with poor access to educational facilities possess a minimum qualification that limits their options for earning. The study reveals that there is a shift from the traditional occupation of the family because of various social and economic constraints historically faced by entrepreneurs. As a result, the entrepreneurs willingly embraced entrepreneurship, indicating the strong influence of pull motivation. In terms of enterprise, majority of the entrepreneurs are engaged in the service sector which is, in fact, initiated and supported by the savings of the

entrepreneurs rather than formal financial institutions. However, the support of the family cannot be ignored in this regard. It is a beginning and the social acceptance of entrepreneurship in this society is important for its growth and it stems from a family.

With regard to the entrepreneurial propensity among the Adivasis, the study finds that the disposition of the entrepreneurs in personal resourcefulness is more compared to the other dimensions of propensity. Overall, the propensity of Adivasi entrepreneurs ranges from moderate to very high and the majority of them display high entrepreneurial propensity. However, it should be noted that the findings of the study cannot be generalised to other communities or entrepreneurial communities. The study is limited to Adivasi entrepreneurs (Munda, Oraon, Kharia and Santhal tribes) only.

This study contributes to the literature on tribal and entrepreneurship, and the studies of ethnic entrepreneurship as well. It provides a base for further studies on Adivasis with regard to entrepreneurship. The constraints of the study illuminate the areas where it calls for future research, particularly the population of Adivasis in Assam, the number of Adivasi enterprises registered and unregistered, and finally, the proper identification of indigenous tribes (Adivasis) in Assam.

Author's Contribution:

Binita Topno: Formulation of idea, data collection, methodology and analysis of data.

R. A. J. Syngkon: Drafting, Reviewing and finalising the manuscript.

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