

**“DETERMINANTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG DALIT AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES: A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PERSPECTIVE”**

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## ABSTRACT

The current paper explores the importance of social entrepreneurs and what contribution social entrepreneurship makes towards inclusive socio-economic growth of the Cuddalore region of Tamil Nadu, observing Dalit and tribal entrepreneurs particularly. These groups and historically disadvantaged groups because of the systemic exclusion and caste-based marginalization are emerging as grass roots changemakers in enterprise led initiative. The research is of a mixed-methods nature; the study considers the opinions of 100 social entrepreneurs who were chosen in a purposive approach. These factors present motivations of such entrepreneurial ventures, socio-cultural issues affecting enterprising people as well as overall meanings of their work and their contributions in developing communities. The results reveal that Dalit and tribal entrepreneurs are majorly involved in education, skill development, agriculture, and healthcare industries as they play a fundamental role in uplifting the socio-economic statuses of their communities. Difficult as they are to access capital, institutional support and market linkages, such entrepreneurs are very resilient and innovative. The study describes the significance of inclusive policy frameworks, particular financial mechanisms and capacity building programs to help the marginalized social entrepreneurs.

**Key words:** Social Entrepreneurship, Dalit entrepreneurs, tribal entrepreneurs, inclusive development, socio-economic growth, marginalized communities, grass rooted innovation, capacity building.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship has gained growing acceptance as an agent of change in resolving unending socio-economic inequalities especially among the marginalized groups in the developing world over the last ten years. The definition of this model as expressed follows the use of the fundamentals of entrepreneurship to generate social value (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). In other parts of the globe, such as in India, where the social exclusion and hierarchies of caste remain deeply ingrained anchors of social stratification, the social entrepreneurship has been developing as a promising method of facilitating an inclusive development. Dalits as well as Scheduled Tribes are the most disadvantaged groups in India that face institutional oppression, social-economic exclusion, little access to education, work, and capital (Thorat & Newman, 2012). Although many state-led initiatives have tried their best to resolve such inequalities, most of them have failed miserably because of poor bureaucracy or non-culturally focused implementation. On the contrary, more and more social entrepreneurs are Dalit and tribal who are on the frontline of community-based enterprises that solve the local challenge using long-term, active, and sustainable remedies. The research paper aims at examining why Dalit and tribal social entrepreneurs play such an important directive role towards generating inclusiveness within socio-economic development. Through the specialization in businesses that consider the services and products provided being based on realities like education, skill, health care, and agriculture sectors, that is, areas which are directly attributed to wellbeing of the impoverished groups, these entrepreneurs have not only found a source of income and job but also subverted the social strata and contributed to grass-root innovations (Desai, 2011; Shrivastav & Perugu 2022). This research design is mixed methodology with the use of case studies, a semi-structured interview, and secondary data analysis to study the motivations, challenges, and social implication of these social ventures in communities. By doing this, it helps to add to the literature as it emphasizes that people in marginalized communities are not just passive participants of the development but active participants of the social change.

### 1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To discuss how community development is supported through demographic profile
2. To find out the dependency between demographic profile and firm profile
3. An analysis on the effect of firm profile on Social entrepreneurship

## 2. REVIEW OF LITRATURE

Social entrepreneurship has overtaken to become a change agent in attaining socio-economic development especially among the marginalized societies. It is the incorporation of a mission-based tradition in social sector and the commercialism of the private sector in resolving the issues in the society (Dees, 1998). In such a context, social entrepreneurship by the Dalit and tribal groups in India has seen a rise as a way to stem out the historical social rejection and economic marginalization.

The need of social entrepreneurship in the development of inclusive development is there in history. According to Mair and Marti (2006), social entrepreneurs work in institutional gaps, so as to offer access to goods and services that are not

available in the traditional markets or through the government. This is particular in the rural and underserved area where Dalit and tribal people live. As an example, a study conducted by Gugan et.al (2024) team work helps to develop the morale by kandavel et.al (2018) narrates of how entrepreneurship among Adivasi community in Assam has resulted in stronger local economic independence and local pride. Caste discrimination and social discrimination have been exerted on Dalits and Tribe in India since historical times (Thorat & Newman, 2007). Social entrepreneurship becomes one of the ways to experience agency, economic self-sufficiency, and social capital in that direction (Banerjee & Ghosh,2019). It has been found that socially disadvantaged communities often make interventions on the basis of lived experience and thus produce more locally relevant and sustainable results by developing them through social entrepreneurs of marginalized origin (Sundar, 2013)According to Shankar, M. (2019)the social entrepreneurs deprived of SC/ST have not just the economic issues to deal with, but also strive to break the social inequalities based on castes. They usually involve the hiring of all, community ownership regimes and development of livelihood skills in their enterprises. This economic and social orientation, thus, helps both individual strength and a change in the system.

Also, social entrepreneurship in the Dalits and tribes is associated with community development factors like education, women empowerment, and health. As the case with tribal women entrepreneurs in Jharkhand, who produced herbal products, whereby, they have gained more income and health consciousness among their people (Tiwary, N. 2020). In the same way, Dalit social entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu have been opening schools and vocational training facilities to solve the educational accessibility gap (Som, R. 2018).Nevertheless, there are difficulties to face. Dalits and tribal entrepreneurs do not have access to capital, networks and institutional support. Various government programs such as the Stand-Up India program and the incubators supported by NGOs have been trying to fill these vacuums, but the willingness to utilize them is low due to bureaucracy and socio-cultural obstacles (SN, R. R., &Sasidharan2020). Moreover, discrimination in markets and supply chains of caste still prevents development.

In recent literature, it is mentioned that there is a need to support the ecosystem in nurturing social entrepreneurs among the marginalized groups. These are mentoring, financial inclusion, legal support, and interventions at the policy level (Pathak, S., & Mukherjee, S. 2021). These impacts have to be subsequently calculated in the longer term of such initiatives on societal socio-economic mobility and caste change through quantitative research.To sum up, it can be mentioned that social entrepreneurship among Dalits and tribal communities has a great potential of developing socio-economically. By melding the concepts of economic empowerment and social justice, these entrepreneurs are at the forefront of being able to transform the developmental narratives running in India.

### 3.METHODOLOGY

The study will evaluate the socio-economic progress of the social entrepreneurs of Cuddalore District, Tamilnadu. There are several sources of secondary data which will be sought and they are reports, handbooks, action plans, pamphlets, journals, books and magazines. The proposed research will take a random sample of 100 Dalits and tribes social entrepreneurs in the list of District Industries Centre. It will employ simple random sampling technique in data collection of primary data. These sectors will include the Manufacturing, Trading, and Service. Analyzing the data will utilize statistic tools such as average procedures.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sl. No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	85	85.0
2	Female	15	15.0

**Table 4.1 Socio Economic Conditions and Gender wise Dalits and Tribes Social Entrepreneur**

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

The statistics shows that the sample surveyed was largely dominated by men with 85 percent being male. Nevertheless, gender imbalance is also skewed high with females forming only 15 percent of the total. This imbalance can be applicable to a particular survey type e.g. the industry or group with a higher representation of gender.

**Table 4.2 Age wise Dalits and Tribes Social Entrepreneur**

Sl. No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	Less 35	52	52.0
2	35-45	35	35.0
3	Above 45	13	13.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of the people surveyed (52) are below 35, and the age shows that the survey has a young population. One third (35%) are between the age of 35-45 years which is a major mid career representation. The percentage of those over 45 is also very low (13%), which is a sign of a preference to younger and middle-aged demographic. This information indicates the existence of a young population, where many people are found in their early to middle careers with fewer of the old.

**Table 4.3 Marital status Dalits and Tribes Social Entrepreneur**

Sl. No.	Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	68	68.0
2	Unmarried	32	32.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of the respondents (68 percent) are married and this means that marriage is the most common marital status. Nevertheless, an important part (32%) of the population is unmarried which means a large single population. It implies that most of the population is married although a percentage is unmarried bearing in mind that there are various ways through which the population is married.

**Table 4.4 Educational Status for Dalits and Tribes Social Entrepreneur**

Sl. No.	Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
	Upto Higher Secondary School	17	17.0
2	Graduate	36	36.0
3	Post Graduate and Above	17	17.0
4	Professional	30	30.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of the respondents are graduates (36 percent), and the most frequent educational level is a bachelor degree. The professionals to comprise 30 percent of the population, and they have vocational training in any specialty such as engineering, medicine, law, or management. The share of those having an education between "Up to Higher Secondary School" and "Post Graduate and Above" is also equivalent, and that is 17 and 17 percent respectively, which implies that the education level in general in the population is balanced between primary education and post-graduate degrees. The different educational background is represented in the data, with special focus on tertiary education (83%).

**Table 4.5 Level of Income Social Entrepreneur**

Sl. No.	Annual Income	Frequency	Percentage
1	Up to 1 Lakh	23	23.0
2	1-5 Lakh	33	33.0
3	5-10 Lakh	16	16.0
4	Above 10 Lakh	28	28.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Findings also show that 23 per cent of the sample members had the lowest income as they earn less than one lakh in a year. The highest income is between 1-5 lakhs and 33 percentage have an average income. The median salary is 5-10 lakh and 16 percent of them who earn the average salary. Salary is above ten lakhs and 28 percent of people generate enormous annual income.

**Table 4.6 Have you had any previous work experience of respondents**

Sl. No.	Have you had any previous work experience	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	85	85.0
2	No	15	15.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of the sample population (85%) already has a work experience which means that they belong to the professional category of the workforce. Only 15 per cent have no work experience before and this is probably due to young career entrants or ones who have shifted out of education or non-working careers. This means that the population of people surveyed mainly comprises of the experienced ones.

**Table 4.7 How long did you work before you started up your current business of respondents**

Sl. No.	how long did you work before you started up your current business	Frequency	Percentage
1	2 years or less	26	26.0
2	3-5 years	24	24.0
3	6-10 years	14	14.0
4	11-20 years	31	31.0
5	21 years or more	5	5.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of the entrepreneurs (31%) have had years of professional experience (11-20 years) before setting up their firms, showing a strong preference to working years. Among the entrepreneurs, a great number began with 5 years or lesser previous work experience with 26 per cent and 24 per cent beginning with less than 5 years of work experience. Even less frequent (14%) were the middle-career transitions: few of them waited 21 years and more to begin their businesses.

**Table 4.8 Family Size of the respondents**

Sl. No.	Formal training you received after start up of this business	Frequency	Percentage
1	Management	27	27.0
2	Technical	39	39.0
3	Both of them	18	18.0
4	None of them	16	16.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data  
 The statistics reveal that there are more nuclear families, which comprise 58 percent of the surveyed persons, it means that there is a pattern of decreased

numbers of people who live in a larger, interdependent family. The joint families even though they are dominant make up a fair share (42%). Nevertheless, the significant parts of the population are both nuclear and joint families, which denotes a fusion of the modern and traditional living styles. To analyze the relationship between demographic profile and firm profile

**Table 4.9 Formal training you received after start up of this business**

Sl. No.	Family	Frequency	Percentage
1	Nuclear	58	58.0
2	Joint	42	42.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of the entrepreneurs own (39%) post start-up training and the most likely one is a technical skill (39%). This is so because product development, the delivery of services, as well as efficiency in operations requires keen technical expertise. Management training also matters (27 percent) and suggests that there is more to business acumen than technical knowledge. The lesser percentage (18%) chooses both kinds of training, which implies the

focus on one major area of improvement. Of this 16 per cent figure were the entrepreneurs who never received formal training, probably through earlier experience, experiential training or through informal networks of training. In general, there is a rising amount of investment in skill provision by the entrepreneurs once they start businesses.

**Table 4.10 Formal training you received before start up of this business**

Sl. No.	Formal training you received before start up of this business	Frequency	Percentage
1	Management	26	26.0
2	Technical	28	28.0
3	Both of them	18	18.0
4	None of them	28	28.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

It has been revealed in the data that 26 percent of young entrepreneurs were formally trained and tested in management and 28 percent of them were trained in technical skills prior to opening up their businesses. Business fundamentals and experience in the industry were both regarded as useful requirements. Nevertheless, 28 percent of the entrepreneurs did not complete any pre-business education experience which implies they might have self-taught, previous work experience, or informal extensions. The less popular is mixed training (only 18 per cent of them receive both at the same time). This implies that although there were those entrepreneurs who favored the holistic approach, others specialized in a particular section or depended on informal education. The figures indicate the varying journeys that entrepreneurs make towards entrepreneurship whereby some entrepreneurs get into the business through formal training whereas others obtain informal learning.

**Table 4.11 Firm location**

Sl. No.	Firm location	Frequency	Percentage
1	Urban	46	46.0
2	Semi-Urban	39	39.0
3	Rural	15	15
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of the firms are based on both the urban and semi-urban regions with the total standing at 85%. The population is concentrated in urban locations on account of superior facilities, access to markets and resources. There is a compromise between the lower operational expenses and accessibility in semi-urban as this location accounts 39 % of the firms. Areas in the countryside which represent a low of the 15 percent subject to firms do not hold much because of such factors as the lack of market size, infrastructure trouble or sources of resources. In general, businesses are favored in urban and semi-urban setups, whereas the percentage of businesses ranged in the rural areas is less.

**Table 4.12 Number of employees**

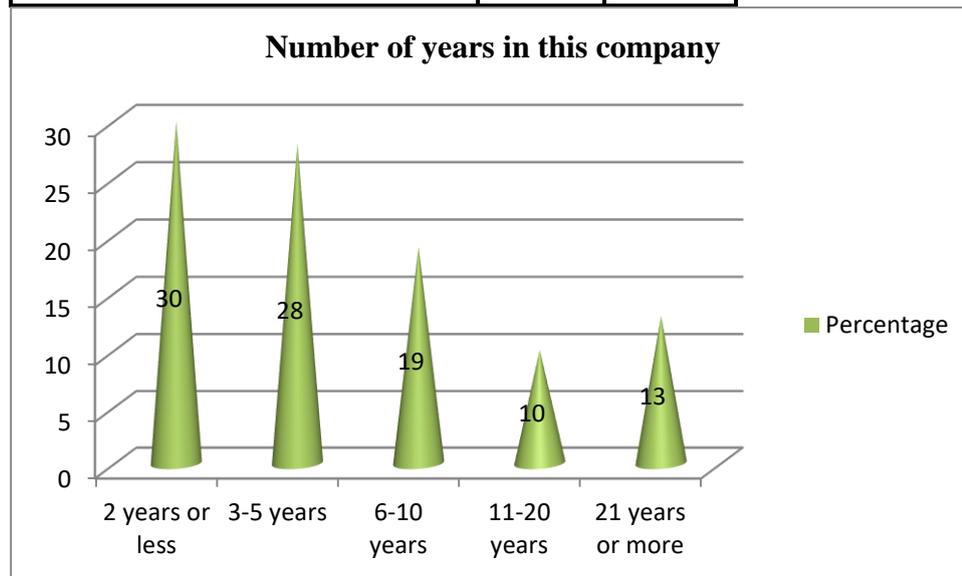
Sl. No.	Number of employees	Frequency	Percentage
1	Less than 20	63	63.0
2	20-100	32	32.0
3	101-200	5	5.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Out of the sampled businesses, 63 percent are small and micro-enterprises with a large representation of small-to-medium businesses (32 percent) and a small percentage of bigger businesses (5 percent). Most of the businesses have less than 20 employees, which means that they are oriented towards small and micro-businesses. Small to medium-sized firms distribution is a norm in an economy where the small and medium enterprises dominate the business sector.

**Table 4.13 Number of years in this company**

Sl. No.	Number of years in this company	Frequency	Percentage
1	2 years or less	30	30.0
2	3-5 years	28	28.0
3	6-10 years	19	19.0
4	11-20 years	10	10.0
5	21 years or more	13	13.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0



**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

The table indicates that 100 of the people are classified into groups according to working experience in the current company. Data has been classified into five periods including 2 years or less, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, 11- 20 and 21 years, and above. The data reveals that 30 percent of the respondents are relatively new in the company with more than 50 percent of them having moderateness tenure in the company. 19 percent of respondents are medium tenured in the company which implies a considerable time in the company, whereas 10 percent of respondents enjoy a long tenure at the company at more than 21 years of employment.

**Table 4.14 Ownership of the company**

Sl. No.	Ownership of the company	Frequency	Percentage
1	Single owner	81	81.0
2	Partnership	19	19.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

The statistics show that the prevalent form of business ownership is single-owner businesses since they represent more than four-fifths of the sample, thus, meaning that individual entrepreneurship is dominant. The partnership firms are less than twelfth, and less popular than single-owner structures. Distribution of such kind is widespread in the economies in which small and micro-enterprises, which are managed by one person, constitute the large share of the business environment.

**Table 4.15 How much have you invested in this business**

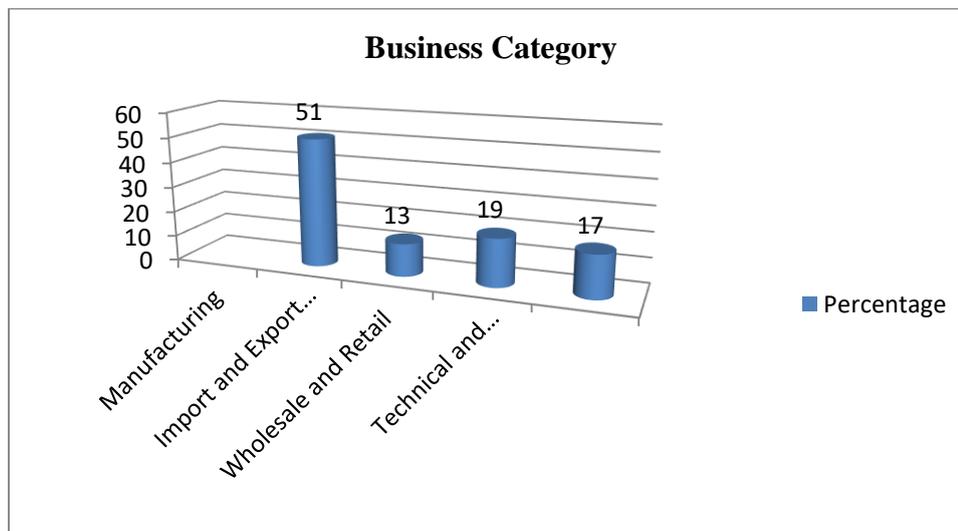
Sl. No.	How much have you invested in this business	Frequency	Percentage
1	Up to 1 Lakh	25	25.0
2	1-5 Lakh	22	22.0
3	5-10 Lakh	25	25.0
4	Above Lakh	28	28.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

The data indicates a varied investment environment among businesses and 47 percent of businesses commence with investment up to 5 Lakh which implies that businesses have varied investment needs. Almost half of the entrepreneurship is a small capital undertaking and 22 percent of firms in the greater than 10 Lakh segment are putting things in a large amount of capital. The investment bracket does not show a high concentration with slight precipitation at the upper and lower sides. The investment climate in these businesses is mixed, with some businesses having low entry capital and a high percentage of business dealings designated into high investment deposits, which means that the business scales and the desires of investors are varied.

**Table 4.16 Business category**

Sl. No.	Business category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Manufacturing	51	51.0
2	Import and Export Trade	13	13.0
3	Wholesale and Retail	19	19.0
4	Technical and Engineering Services	17	17.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0



**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

The business category is dominated by the manufacturing sector which consists of more than 50 percent of firms surveyed, thus the business is industrial inclined. Nonetheless, the majority of companies are concerned with trade and services, the overall share of which is 40%, including a large percentage in such categories as the field of "Wholesale and Retail" (19%) and the category of "Technical and Engineering Services" (17%). The most minimal division in international trade is 13 percent in the terms of Import and Export Trade. This means that there exists a multi-colored economic horizon, heavily inclined towards production of goods. The above statistics indicate that manufacturing is the major business undertaking among the surveyed firms.

**Table 4.17 How many years you are doing social activities**

Sl. No.	How many years you are doing social activities	Frequency	Percentage
1	Blow 5 years	68	68.0
2	5-10 years	16	16.0
3	Above 10 years	16	16.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

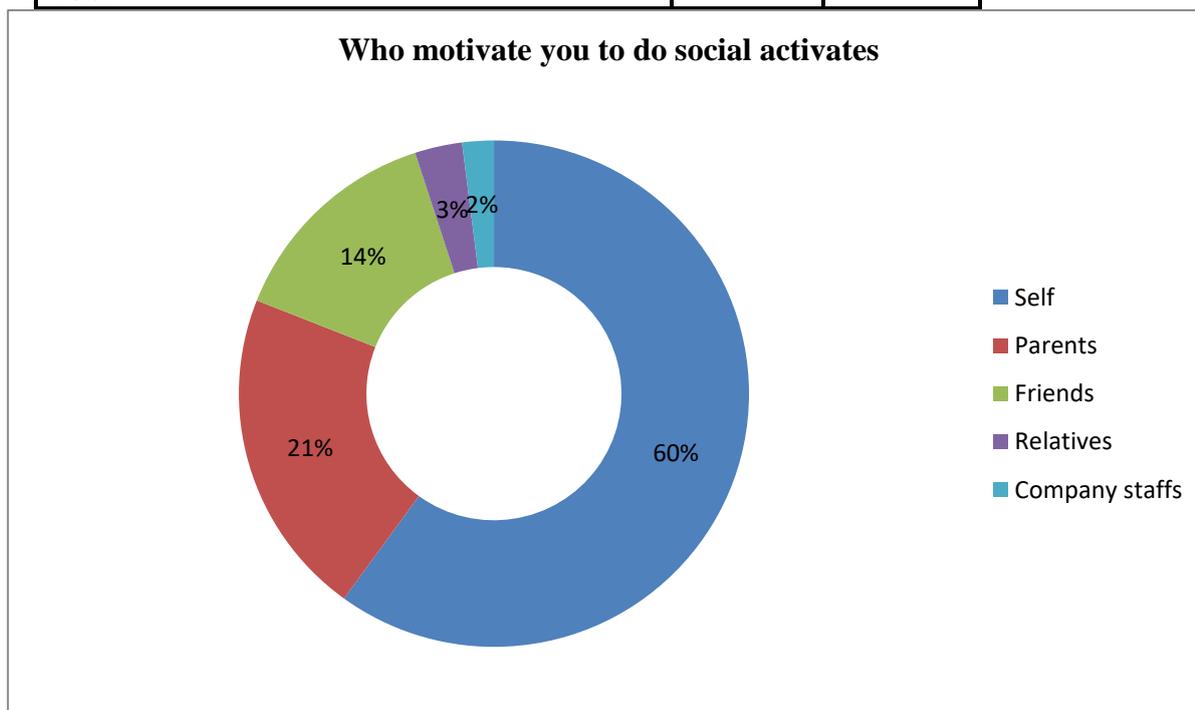
**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most people (68%) never practiced social activities before 5 years, which means that their involvement has boomed.

The percentage of the same group of people engaged in 5-10 years (the same as the one engaged in more than 10) implies that there is a stable group interested in the long-term engagement in the social cause. The information is strongly biased towards newer actors which implies higher awareness, new projects, or change in generation participation. In general, the majority of people are quite new to the social life.

**Table 4.18 Who motivate you to do social activates**

Sl. No.	Who motivate you to do social activates	Frequency	Percentage
1	Self	60	60.0
2	Parents	21	21.0
3	Friends	14	14.0
4	Relatives	3	3.0
5	Company staffs	2	2.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0

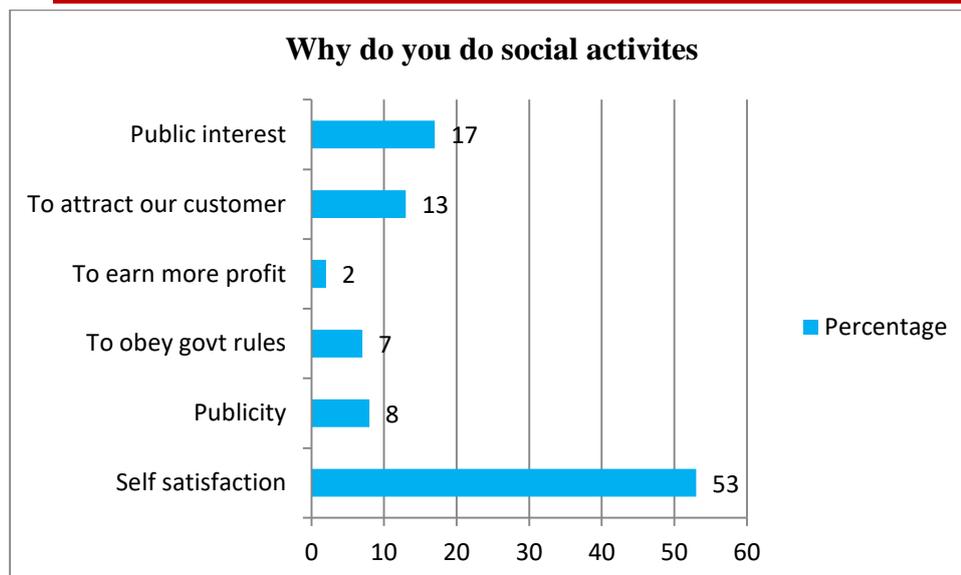


**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

Most of them (60%) are self-motivated, it means personal conviction and altruism are the main forces of social engagement. The role of parents is great, as more than a fifth (21%) of the respondents are encouraged by the parents, and the influence of upbringing and family philosophy cannot be ignored. Although some are driven by friends (14%), the influence of parents is cited higher than that of the former. The external/ organizational impacts are low and relatives and company standards play negligible roles (3 and 2 percent respectively). This implies that there is a stronger need of real personal interest and family values to social involvement of this group than external social or professional influences

**Table 4.19 Why do you do social activates.**

Sl. No.	Why do you do social activates	Frequency	Percentage
1	Self satisfaction	53	53.0
2	Publicity	8	8.0
3	To obey govt rules	7	7.0
4	To earn more profit	2	2.0
5	To attract our customer	13	13.0
6	Public interest	17	17.0
<b>Total</b>		100	100.0



**Source:** Computed from the Primary Data

The facts indicate that people are motivated to participate in social activities mostly by the intrinsic motivation factor with self-satisfaction playing the most important role (53 percent). Another considerable motivator is that of public interest that constitutes 17 percent of respondents. The motivation is the secondary thing and only 13 percent of respondents mentioned business-related reasons. The level of conformity is low and only 7 percent of the respondents who responded reported to be obeying the government rules and 8 percent of the respondents reported on publicity. It indicates that external forces and image making are of little significance as opposed to inside and neighbourhood-oriented motivation. As a short conclusion, people still carry on social activities mainly because of self-pleasure and true concern about the welfare of the masses.

## 5. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. **High Self-Motivation:** Sixty percent of the respondents ranked self-motivation as the most important element in determining them to indulge in social activities.
2. **Monopoly of Manufacturing Sector:** The entrepreneurial activity in manufacture is more than fifty percent of the total number of entrepreneurs and it depicts the manufacturing potential of marginalized entrepreneurship.
3. **Female Penetration:** Approximately 15 percent of all social entrepreneurs are women, which mean that there is a severe gender divide.
4. **Young-led Entrepreneurship:** 52 percent of the respondents were below 35 years indicating the youth influence in social innovation.
5. **Penetration of Small-Scale Ventures:** 63 per cent of firms have less than 20 employees indicating the existence of dominance of micro-enterprise practice.
6. **Training Gaps:** Although 39 percent of them were technically trained after starting the business, 28 percent of them were not trained at all before starting up the enterprise.
7. **Urban & Semi-Urban Orientation:** 85 percent of businesses in the survey were found in urban or semi urban setting.
8. **Community-Based Impact:** Education, Vocational training, and health are the main spheres of social entrepreneurship.

## 6. SUGGESTIONS

1. **Improve Financial Support Mechanisms:** The government and the private stakeholders need to ensure ease of access to seed capital and soft borrowing opportunities to Dalit and the tribal entrepreneurs.
2. **Design Inclusionary Incubation Programmes:** Incubators and accelerators should develop culturally sensitive programmes that will be inclusive to the marginalized groups such as providing mentoring and technical curriculum.
3. **Policy-Level Interventions:** It is essential to develop such inclusive policies that directly target the discrimination based on the caste cluster within the ecosystem of entrepreneurship. This has to take place through the involvement of community.
4. **Gender Inclusion:** Due to the low numbers of women, it should be a targeted campaign to support and encourage women social entrepreneurs belonging to the marginal communities through capacity building and structure of supporting the family through a supportive system.
5. **Enhance Market Connections:** Setting up cooperation models and collaborative platform will assist in extending market reach and bargaining higher rates of goods and services of Dalit and tribal organizations.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The research paper was an overall evaluation of the role of Dalit and tribal social entrepreneurs in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, towards socio-economic growth in the region. The insight has found that these peripheral entrepreneurs have become key sources of change particularly in areas such as education, skills building, farming and health. They

have systemic difficulties of access to capital, lack of institutional support, and the dominance of existing prejudice based on caste which they persistently overcome and make a valuable contribution to society.

There was a potential customer base of young and male entrepreneurial base and most were remunerated previously. A sizeable number of these entrepreneurs practice micro and small enterprises with a higher percentage being in the manufacturing industry which indicates the grassroots level of these businesses. The aspects that many of them are self-driven and motivated by the satisfaction are important in this case as they reflect the value-oriented nature of social entrepreneurship.

#### **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

The research paves the way to greater longitudinal and comparative studies of social-economic mobility processes of Dalit and tribal entrepreneurs. In future research, it should be measured in terms of education, the level of income, health, and social mobility within the community. There is also the possibility of interdisciplinary studies combining sociology, economics, and development studies that need to further bring out the interaction between caste, entrepreneurship, and policy responsiveness.

It is also an opportunity to encompass digital inclusion activities to assist disadvantaged entrepreneurs in using technology to expand their businesses. Studies concerning the digital gap on social innovations and technology among the Dalits and tribes would bring a useful contribution to scholarly and policy-making literature.

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