

Problems and Prospects of Dalit Entrepreneurship: Research Review

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Abstract

As per the Indian constitution, all citizens of India are equal, irrespective of their caste, religion, race, and place of birth. Dalits have been at the bottom of the political, economic, and social ladder. Various governments have tried to improve the condition of Dalits with the help of reservations, but with very limited results. It was widely accepted that Dalits have raised their status in politics, but the same cannot be said about their economic and social status. Dalits are underrepresented when it comes to entrepreneurship or self-employment. When Dalits opt for entrepreneurship, they face problems related to caste and social status, in addition to general problems of entrepreneurship. Discrimination is a major problem faced by Dalits at each stage of business. Dalits face various other problems, like short credit period, shortage of labour, lack of networks, lack of support, stiff competition, and so on. The biggest prospect for Dalits is various government schemes specially designed for them. The present study aims to review the problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurs and ways to improve Dalit entrepreneurship in India.

Keywords: Dalit Entrepreneurship, Problems, Prospects, Literature Review

Introduction

As per Hindu religious texts, the Indian society is divided into four Varnas: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Dalits were all together discarded from the

Varna system. Dalits were also known as untouchables, and politically, they are accepted as outcasts. Scheduled castes (SC) make up 16.8% of the total population in India and scheduled tribes 8.6%; however, only 12.45% and 4.1% of businesses are owned by SC and ST, respectively (MSME, 2017-2018). These figures indicate that Dalits are more in population, but they are represented poorly when it comes to entrepreneurship. To achieve higher economic growth, India should focus more on Dalit entrepreneurs and should address their problems.

Various studies have researched discrimination based on demographic variables like race, gender, and class (Amis et al., 2020); however, negligible attention has been given to the caste system, which is a prospering system of inequality (Chrispal et al., 2020). Similarly, Bapuji et al. (2020) observed that the caste system supports inequalities by unevenly allocating social and economic resources among members of different castes. As per Arabsheibani et al. (2018), rising inequalities among social groups can increase social tension, and economic growth can become uncertain. Hence, there is a need to develop a better understanding of Dalit entrepreneurship.

To understand the problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurs in a better manner, this paper attempts to study and review research work done to date regarding problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurs. The research paper is organised in the following manner. First, a summary and analysis of the literature review are discussed. After that, the problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurs are analysed and summarised. The paper is concluded with ways to improve Dalit entrepreneurship, limitations, and implications of research.

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Research Objective

The primary objective of the study is to review, analyse, and classify research work regarding problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurship. The research study also aims to identify problems faced by Dalit entrepreneurs and suggest ways to improve entrepreneurship among Dalits.

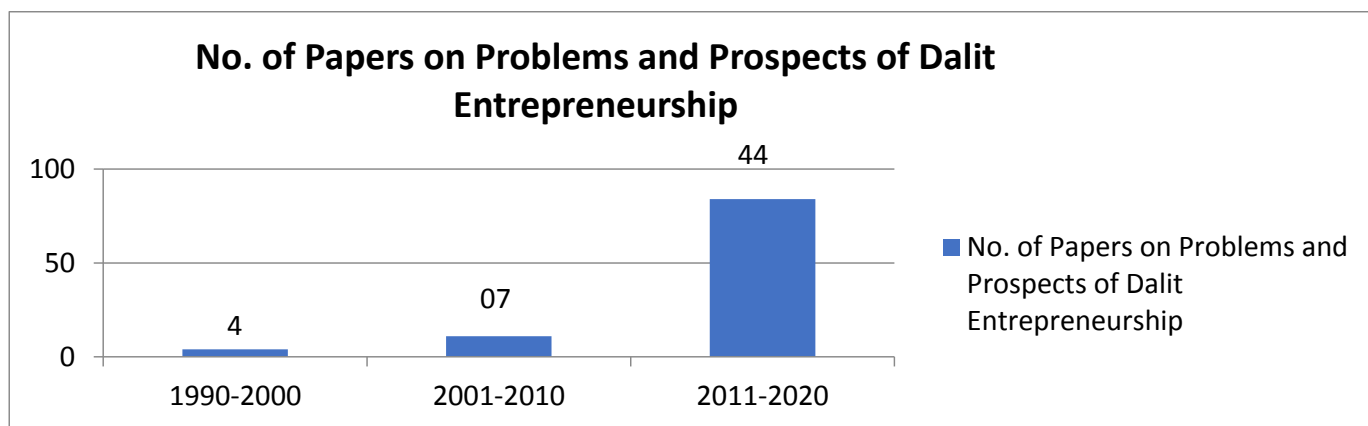
Methodology

The primary aim of the study is to review and classify the research work done on the problems in Dalit entrepreneurship. Sources used for research articles were e-databases, like EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. Primary keywords used to find research articles are Dalits,

problems, and prospects. Secondary keywords used to find research articles are constraints, discrimination, and barriers.

Classification of Research Articles on Dalit Entrepreneurship's Problems and Prospects

Researchers found a total of 55 research articles related to the problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurship with the help of the above-mentioned methodology. Number of research articles published is scarce during the first (1990-2000) and second decade (2001-2010); however, the research articles have seen enormous growth in the third decade (2011-2020), which is summarised in Fig. 1.

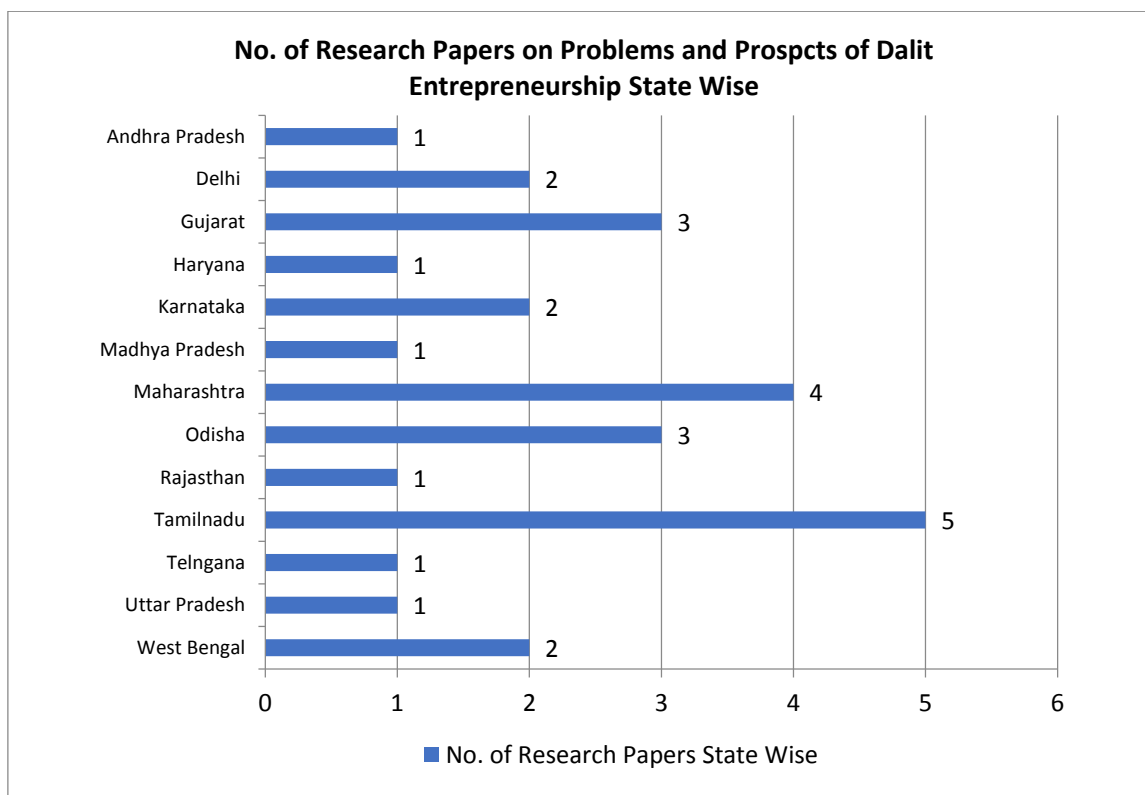


Source: Researchers' Compilation.

Fig. 1: Summary of Research Papers Decade-Wise

With the help of further analysis, it was observed that 38 research studies were empirical and 17 were conceptual in nature. As the concept of caste is limited to India, most of the research studies are conducted in India. Only two research studies related to the problems and prospects

of Dalit entrepreneurship were conducted in Nepal. Classification of research studies conducted based on states is summarised in Fig. 2. Out of 38 empirical studies, 18 were conducted with the help of India-level data and 20 were conducted in one or more states.



Source: Researchers' Compilation.

Fig. 2: Summary of Research Papers State-Wise

Research articles regarding problems and prospects are scattered and there is no dedicated research journal for the same. The list of selected journals from which articles are referred is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: List of Selected Journals with Research Papers on Dalit Entrepreneurship or Caste

Sr. No.	Name of Journal	Sr. No.	Name of Journal
1	Academy of Management Annals	6	Journal of Business Ethics
2	Economic Modelling	7	Annual Review of Sociology
3	Journal of Research in Business and Management	8	Journal of Social Inclusion Studies
4	Organisation Studies	9	Asian Survey
5	Economic and Political Weekly	10	Studies of Tribes and Tribals

Source: Researcher's Compilation.

Problems Faced by Dalit Entrepreneurs

Prakash (2009) conducted a rigorous study of Dalit entrepreneurs in middle India. It was observed that Dalits are expected to be true to dominant social constructs, which suggests that they serve society manually and which considers them to be 'unfit' for higher roles, like education, technical advancement, and continuous exposure to the upper caste. It was also observed that for upper castes, dominant social networks exist and their resources, like credit, information, and control over labour supply are not available for Dalits. This study pointed out that Dalits have weaker networks in the market. In line with the previous study, Jodhka (2010) observed that Dalits faced hardships like lack of resources and caste prejudice, but they all seemed proud of the fact that they were in business and were entrepreneurs. It was observed that despite several positive changes, caste continues to play a role in the economy, and for Dalits, it was almost always negative. Dalits are crippled due to lack of social

resources. The study points out that even in adverse conditions entrepreneurship is rising among Dalits.

Gaikwad (2012) analysed issues and constraints among Dalit entrepreneurs. It was observed that Dalits face various challenges, like discrimination by the dominant caste people, restrictions on choosing an industry, non-cooperation by various agencies, difficulty in finding manpower, social exclusion, and so on. Deshpande et al. (2013) examined the caste and gender of small businesses in India, with reference to entrepreneurship and survival. It was found that Dalit enterprises have declined over a period of time and are smaller in size, which is in agreement with previous studies. It was also observed that Dalit businesses are at the bottom of the corporate ladder.

Iyer et al. (2013) noticed that there are substantial caste differences existing in entrepreneurship, and the Dalits are significantly underrepresented in the ownership of the enterprise. Dalit enterprises operate in the traditional brick and mortar sector and capitalist modernity coexists with the caste system; however, with globalisation, caste consciousness has deepened (Teltumbde, 2013). Vaid (2014) noticed that caste has transformed; however, members of some caste obtain economic and social advantages, but deny the same to lower caste members. Prakash (2015) observed that Dalit entrepreneurs are allowed to enter the market, but with a position of disadvantage, and caste continues to contribute to discrimination.

Thorat (2002) observed that Dalits face the problem of discrimination and constitutional laws have helped very little to get rid of the evil of caste discrimination. Dalits were not allowed to change occupation and they faced discrimination in employment, rent, wage rate,

rate of interest, and so on. Mahajan (2011) studied entrepreneurship among marginalised groups in Maharashtra and noticed that Dalits faced various problems like lack of awareness, subsidy, rate of interest, lengthy government procedures, and so on. Dalit entrepreneurs face various problems like discrimination by the upper caste people, restriction on choosing an industry, and non-cooperation by the government agencies (Gaikwad, 2012). Dalits face problems like prolonged administrative procedure, lack of working capital, lack of education, and a lesser amount of loan from the bank (Madaboyina, 2020; Mohapatra et al., 2012). Dalits face marketing problems; they have low risk taking capacity and lack of entrepreneurial aptitude (Sardar, 2015). In a similar study, Lokhande (2016) observed that the Dalits had the following problems: poor industrial infrastructure, lower recovery rate, lower demand, and so on.

Various studies have tried to identify problems faced by women Dalit entrepreneurs. Irudayam et al. (2006) examined violence against Dalit women and found that Dalit women face physical, verbal, and sexual violence frequently. Dalit women face the problem of landlessness, untouchability, lack of finance, lack of job opportunity, lack of role models, and weak social status (Arumugam, 2014; Asrani et al., 2011). Bhuvaneshwari et al. (2015) have observed that Dalit women face gender discrimination, lack of support from family regarding finance and risk-taking, lack of economic freedom, lack of encouragement, and so on. Nandi et al. (2018) opine that lack of education, lower household income, lack of awareness about entrepreneurship, and absence of self-help groups are hindrances for Dalit women entrepreneurs. The summary of selected research papers is mentioned in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Literature Review

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Findings</i>
1.	Prakash (2010)	Dalit entrepreneurs in Middle India	To examine the agency of Dalit capitalists.	The study is based on primary data, which was collected with the help of interviews, with a sample size of 90.	It was also observed that for upper castes, dominant social networks exist; however, Dalits have weaker networks.
2.	Jodhka (2010)	Dalits in business: Self-employed scheduled castes in Northwest India	To examine barriers, resource mobilisation, and discrimination faced by Dalit entrepreneurs.	The study is based on primary data, which was collected with a questionnaire, with a sample size of 118.	Dalits faced hardships, like lack of resources and caste prejudice. It was also observed that despite several positive changes, caste continues to play a role in the economy.
3.	Santhi (2011)	Entrepreneurship challenges and opportunities in India	To analyse challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurs.	Secondary data has been used for the study.	It was observed that raw material, capital, and policy changes were the different challenges, and government support and training programmes were the opportunities for entrepreneurs.
4.	Gaikwad (2012)	Issues and constraints in entrepreneurship in general and among Dalits in particular	To determine the challenges and constraints faced by Dalit entrepreneurs.	The study is based on secondary data.	It was observed that Dalits face various challenges, like discrimination by the dominant caste people, restrictions on choosing an industry, non-cooperation by various agencies, difficulty in finding manpower, social exclusion, and so on.
5.	Iyer et al. (2013)	Caste and entrepreneurship in India	To determine caste differences in entrepreneurship.	The study is based on secondary data.	It was observed that there are substantial caste differences that exist in entrepreneurship, and Dalits are significantly underrepresented in the ownership of the enterprise.
6.	Deshpande et al. (2013)	Entrepreneurship or survival? Caste and gender of small businesses in India	To analyse caste and gender disparities among the entrepreneurs.	Secondary data has been used for the study.	It was observed that Dalit enterprises are smaller in size and Dalit businesses work at the bottom of the corporate ladder.
7.	Paramasivan et al. (2013)	Status of Dalit entrepreneurs in India	To examine the status of Dalit entrepreneurs with respect to structure, nature, type of business, and so on.	The study is based on secondary data and descriptive analysis.	It was observed that due to changing attitude of educated Dalit youth and government policies encouraging entrepreneurs, the number of Dalit entrepreneurs has increased gradually.
8.	Mehta (2013)	Women entrepreneurship: Purpose, problems & prospects: A study of Udairpur District	To find out the problems and prospects of women entrepreneurs.	The study is based on primary data, which was collected with a questionnaire, with a sample size of 100.	It was pointed out that women face various problems, like marketing, finance, credit, family problems, and so on. It was suggested that women entrepreneurs need to be given confidence, independence, and mobility for success.
9.	Swathy (2014)	A study on challenges faced by entrepreneurs	To study the challenges and ways to overcome barriers faced by entrepreneurs.	Primary data was collected with the help of a questionnaire, with a sample size of 85.	It was observed that entrepreneurs face personal, social, financial, and technological challenges, and so on. Competition was the biggest challenge and hard work was the biggest enabling factor.
10.	Paramasivan (2015)	Role of SIDBI in promotion of Dalit entrepreneurs	To examine the role of the Small Industries Development Bank of India for the development of Dalit entrepreneurs.	Secondary data has been used for the study.	It was observed that the government has taken lots of initiatives to promote Dalit entrepreneurship through its various schemes, programmes, and assistance. Financial institutions provide special assistance to Dalit entrepreneurs, with regard to subsidy, concession, and rebate.

Sr. No.	Authors	Title	Objective	Methodology	Findings
11.	Paramasivan (2015)	Economic violence against Dalit entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu	To identify economic violence against Dalit entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu.	The study is descriptive in nature, where both primary (sample size 640) and secondary data are collected.	It was pointed out that economic violence against Dalit entrepreneurs still exists and Dalits find it difficult to compete with upper-caste entrepreneurs due to various obstacles.
12.	Devi Bhuvaneshwari et al. (2015)	Dalit women empowerment through entrepreneurship: A case of Coimbatore district	To examine the profile of women Dalit entrepreneurs and to understand problems faced by women Dalit entrepreneurs.	The study is descriptive in nature, where primary data is collected with the help of a questionnaire, with a sample size of 100.	It was observed that Dalit women face various constraints, like dual roles, lack of economic freedom and exposure, lack of financial knowledge and encouragement from family, and so on.
13.	Sardar (2015)	Problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurship	To examine the problems and prospects faced by Dalit entrepreneurs and show assistance provided by the government to Dalits.	Secondary data has been used for the study.	It was observed that the government provides various facilities to Dalit entrepreneurs, like entrepreneurship development programmes, consultancy services, subsidies in interest for loans, and so on.
14.	Lokhande (2016)	Problems of socio-economically backward class entrepreneurs: An analysis by responses	To study the demographic profile and problems of backward class entrepreneurs.	The study relied on primary data, which was collected with both questionnaires and interviews, with a sample size of 197.	It was noticed that backward class entrepreneurs had been facing problems like poor industrial infrastructure, inadequate financial services, lower recovery rates, stiff competition, and lower demand.
15.	Agarwal (2017)	Problems and prospects of woman entrepreneurship – A review of literature	To examine problems and prospects of women entrepreneurship.	Secondary data has been used for the research.	It was observed that women entrepreneurs face various problems, like lack of education, social barriers, financial problems, lack of self-confidence, and so on.
16.	Srithar (2017)	Socio-economic status of Dalit women entrepreneurs in Madurai district	To analyse the socio-economic profile of Dalit women before and after becoming an entrepreneur.	Both primary and secondary data were used for the research purpose, with a sample size of 100.	The status of Dalit women has improved significantly after becoming an entrepreneur.
17.	Nisargapriya (2015)	Entrepreneurship: A path for empowerment of Dalit women in rural areas	To assess the socio-economic status of Dalit women entrepreneurs in rural areas.	The study is descriptive in nature, where primary data is collected with the help of a questionnaire, with a sample size of 50.	It was observed that the participation of Dalit women was much less than their male counterparts, and they were not aware of the Dalit Indian Chamber and Industry (DICCI).
18.	Gowda V. et al. (2018)	Dalit entrepreneurship in Dakshina Kannada District – Status, problems and prospects	To study profile, entrepreneurial activities, constraints, and challenges of Dalit entrepreneurs.	The study is based on primary data, with a sample size of 50.	It was observed that Dalits engage in various activities, like managing cottage industries, tailoring, poultry farming, and mobile shops. It was found that Dalits face various problems, like marketing, social constraints, tight repayment schedules, and so on.
19.	Laha (2019)	Rural entrepreneurship – Problems and prospects: An empirical analysis	To examine the problems and to give appropriate prospects for rural entrepreneurs.	The study is based on primary data, with a sample size of 288.	It was pointed out that education, age, and family significantly influence the ambition of entrepreneurs, and the rural youth need to be motivated to take up entrepreneurship as a career, with training and sustaining support systems providing all necessary assistance.

Source: Researcher's Compilation.

To summarise, Dalit entrepreneurs face various problems like sociocultural, financial, technical, managerial, competition, lack of support, discrimination, finding manpower, restriction in choosing an industry, and lack of role models. Dalits are facing the above-mentioned problems; however, at the same time, they have various prospects too, which are discussed in the following section.

Prospects of Dalit Entrepreneurs

Constitutional rights, government schemes, and training programmes are prospects for Dalit entrepreneurs. Numerous studies have attempted to analyse the prospects for Dalit entrepreneurs. Dalit entrepreneurs were able to get additional subsidies with the help of the Small Industries Development Bank of India (Paramasivan et al., 2015). Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program was beneficial to the growth of tribal entrepreneurs, and it can help reduce poverty, unemployment, and social disparity (Chaturvedi, 2015; Jena, 2018). Krishnakumar (2018) critically examined the role of Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Corporation Limited and noticed that TAHDCO ensured economic, social, and psychological empowerment of the Dalits.

At the central level, institutions like National SC-ST Hub, National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation, and National Scheduled Tribe Finance and Development Corporation work for the empowerment of Dalits. Dalits can reimburse charges like bank guarantee, bank loan processing, export promotional council membership, testing fee, and so on, with the help of schemes offered by the National SC-ST Hub. The National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation supports scheduled caste entrepreneurs with schemes like term loans at lower interest rates, microcredit finance, green business scheme, Mahila Samridhi scheme, Mahila Kisan scheme, and so on. Similarly, National Scheduled Tribe Finance and Development Corporation offers schemes like term loan scheme, micro-credit scheme for self-help groups, Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana, and so on, for scheduled tribe entrepreneurs.

Ways to Improve the Entrepreneurship Level of Dalits

To increase the entrepreneurial level among Dalits, capital should be used as an important tool. Government should

ensure the availability of funds to ensure the survival and growth of Dalit entrepreneurs. Raj (2019) observed that Dalit entrepreneurs should work in industries where social networks matter less. Government should organise tailor-made programmes for Dalit youth, which can motivate them to select entrepreneurship as a career choice. As per Paramasivan et al. (2013), the government should pay more attention to the implementation of schemes.

Limitations of the Study

The research papers referred for the study are limited to the keywords used for search, and hence, some sources might have been missed by authors. In addition, research papers written in the English language are referred for this study, so some sources may have been missed, which are written in Indian languages.

Future Research

Research studies conducted regarding problems and prospects vary state-wise. In some states a large number of research studies have been conducted and in others, very few. Hence, more in-depth research studies need to be conducted across India. The present study focuses on the problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurs; however, motivation, socio-economic profile, awareness regarding government schemes, and social network impact on Dalit entrepreneurship should be investigated further. The impact of entrepreneurship on social and economic status should also be examined further.

Implications of the Study

Research Implications

The research study can be helpful to the Dalit youth and Dalit entrepreneurs who want to enhance their status with the help of entrepreneurship. Policymakers can gain insight into various problems faced by Dalit entrepreneurship, and they can frame policies to solve these problems.

Academic Implications

A comprehensive study of the problems and prospects of Dalit entrepreneurship will help

researchers to further analyse constraints and prospects in detail.

Conclusion

The field of Dalit entrepreneurship has come a long way in the last three decades. In the current study, a chronological analysis of studies regarding problems and prospects is carried out. It was observed that more number of research studies were conducted in the last decade, compared to earlier decades. In addition, research studies conducted in the north and south of India were more compared to other parts of India.

From the analysis, it is evident that Dalits face numerous problems, in addition to the problems faced by upper-caste entrepreneurs. Various studies have pointed out that Dalits face problems like caste discrimination, lack of finance, lesser credit period, non-cooperation from government officials, lack of education and training, unavailability of labour, and so on. If Dalits want to improve their economic and social status, the path of entrepreneurship can really help. At the same time, Dalit entrepreneurs should try to be part of associations and take the benefit of training programmes and other assistance. The government is definitely making an effort on the empowerment of Dalits; however, it has to monitor schemes to make sure that the benefits of various schemes actually reach the Dalit entrepreneurs.

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