

National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development Through Ecopreneurship: A Welfare-Driven Approach for Forest Dwellers

Pranavi Dake^{1*}, Deepika Dake², Dr. N. Udaya Bhaskar³

¹Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Management Studies, Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh, India.

²Research Scholar, Department of Plant Sciences, School of Life Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Telangana, India.

³Professor, Department of Commerce and Management Studies, Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh, India.

***Corresponding author e-mail:** pranavidake725@gmail.com

Abstract

Introduction: This paper explores how ecopreneurship can serve as a powerful tool for achieving sustainable development among forest-dependent communities, especially in India's Integrated Tribal Development Agency regions. Ecopreneurship, combining environmental sustainability with entrepreneurial innovation, offers a pathway to improve livelihoods, promote financial inclusion, and protect natural ecosystems. Forest dwellers often face socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and limited access to basic services, and while welfare schemes exist, their impact is often limited due to poor implementation and lack of community engagement.

Methodology: This study follows a systematic literature review approach to explore the role of ecopreneurship in driving sustainable development for forest dwellers. The search was conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, Taylor & Francis and Google Scholar using keywords such as "Ecopreneurship

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and Sustainable Development”, “Forest Dwellers and Entrepreneurship”, “Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Livelihood” and “Welfare Schemes for Indigenous Communities”. Only peer-reviewed journal articles from 2015 to 2024 were considered. Included were empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, policy analyses and case studies; excluded were non-peer-reviewed papers and general entrepreneurship studies without environmental concerns. A total of 20 papers were shortlisted and categorized by thematic area, geographical focus and impact metrics, and a qualitative synthesis method was used to identify common trends, gaps and policy implications.

Results & Discussion: The literature reveals that ecopreneurship bridges economic empowerment and environmental sustainability in forest-dwelling communities across four dimensions. On economic impact, sustainable entrepreneurship models increase income security through forest-based industries. On social impact, welfare schemes and ecopreneurship improve livelihood security, education and healthcare access for indigenous populations. On environmental sustainability, ecopreneurs promote non-timber forest product harvesting, agroforestry and sustainable tourism to reduce deforestation while generating income. On policy challenges, studies highlight bureaucratic inefficiencies in implementing government schemes for ecopreneurs, requiring better institutional support. Case studies in community-based forest enterprises show that locally run forest businesses in Cameroon can operate as profitable social entrepreneurs while reaching environmental and social goals, and indigenous ecotourism projects in the Bolivian Amazon demonstrate how social entrepreneurship promotes sustainable living while safeguarding biodiversity.

Conclusion: Particularly in ITDA areas, this study emphasizes the transforming power of ecopreneurship in promoting sustainable development among forest residents. The study emphasizes how environmental, social, and economic resilience can be created by sustainable entrepreneurship under the direction of welfare programs. Still, the success of such programs relies on robust institutional structures, market accessibility, and efforts at capacity building. Long-term policy effects, technology-enabled ecopreneurship, and cross-regional studies to support the pragmatic application of ecopreneurial models for sustainable development should be the main emphasis of future studies.

Keywords: Ecopreneurship; Forest Dwellers; ITDA; Welfare Schemes; Sustainable Development; Systematic Literature Review; Non-Timber Forest Products; Social Entrepreneurship; Financial Inclusion; Indigenous Communities.

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1. Introduction

An indispensable worldwide goal is sustainable development, which calls for a balance between social welfare, environmental protection, and economic progress. Among several strategies, ecopreneurship, a business model combining entrepreneurial innovation with environmental sustainability, has become well-known as a workable means of fostering economic resilience while conserving natural resources. Eco-friendly business practices, lessening of environmental damage, and building sustainable livelihoods help ecopreneurship fit more general goals of sustainable development. In rural and tribal areas, ecopreneurial projects can increase financial independence and improve socio-economic conditions while preserving environmental integrity in developing nations.

Forest-dependent communities, including tribal populations, in India's Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) areas suffer ongoing socio-economic difficulties, including unemployment, financial exclusion, lack of access to quality education, and poor healthcare services. The Indian government has launched several welfare schemes to lower these problems by raising living standards, creating jobs, and fostering financial inclusion. However, many of these programs run across difficulties in execution because of bureaucratic inefficiencies, low community involvement, and environmental issues. By generating self-sustaining economic opportunities and preserving the environmental ecosystem these communities depend on, integrating ecopreneurship with welfare programs can provide a complete approach to handling these issues.

Though growing knowledge of sustainable business models and green entrepreneurship, little study has examined how ecopreneurship might help the socio-economic empowerment of forest dwellers inside ITDA areas. Employing a critical analysis of current studies on the effect of ecopreneurship and welfare schemes on

sustainable development in tribal areas, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) seeks to close this disparity. The research examines how ecopreneurial businesses support financial inclusion, job creation, environmental preservation, and better quality of living. Moreover, it points out areas lacking research and provides policy suggestions for including ecopreneurship in current welfare-oriented systems.

This paper offers a comprehensive perspective on sustainable economic development models by combining insights from academic literature and empirical studies. It stresses the possibilities of ecopreneurship as a transforming tool for socio-environmental sustainability in forest-based communities.

2. Methodology

2.1 Search Strategy

This study follows a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to explore the role of ecopreneurship in driving sustainable development for forest dwellers. The search was conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar using keywords such as:

- "Ecopreneurship and Sustainable Development"
- "Forest Dwellers and Entrepreneurship"
- "Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Livelihood"
- "Welfare Schemes for Indigenous Communities"

Only peer-reviewed journal articles from 2015-2024 were considered to ensure relevance and recent advancements.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Included: Empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, policy analyses, and case studies on sustainable entrepreneurship, welfare schemes, and forest-dependent livelihoods.

Excluded: Non-peer-reviewed papers, articles without explicit reference to sustainability or forest communities, and general entrepreneurship studies without environmental concerns.

2.3 Data Extraction and Synthesis

- A total of 20 papers were shortlisted, categorized based on the criteria below.
- Thematic Area – Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Ecopreneurship, Community Development.
- Geographical Focus – Studies on ITDA regions, Indigenous Communities, and Developing Economies.
- Impact Metrics – Economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- A qualitative synthesis method was used to identify common trends, gaps, and policy implications.

3. Review of the Literature

3.1 Sustainable Growth and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been identified as a catalyst driving economic, environmental, and social changes as well as a means of sustainable development (Filser et al., 2019). Johnson et al. (2019) claim that sustainable entrepreneurship links entrepreneurial activities to systemic society and market changes by functioning inside a multilevel causal framework. From this point of view, entrepreneurial activities affect sustainable results by employing social innovation, environmental preservation, and resource economy. Emphasizing its part in balancing profit-making with sustainability goals, Neumann (2020) did a methodical review examining the effects of entrepreneurship on economic, social, and environmental welfare.

To move toward more sustainable business models, sustainable entrepreneurs must cooperate among stakeholders, including legislators, companies, and local communities

(Rosário et al., 2022). This is consistent with the efforts of Muñoz (2018), who underlined the need for a disciplined, sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem to support long-term socio-economic growth. Emphasizing the need of financial support, skill development, and policy incentives, Gupta et al. (2022) also found critical enablers influencing the adoption of sustainable entrepreneurship in India.

3.2 Ecopreneurship: A Route to Green Economic Development

Green entrepreneurship, sometimes known as ecopreneurship, is a subset of sustainable entrepreneurship whereby environmental consciousness is included in commercial projects (Santini, 2017). Ecopreneurs use creative business models that prioritize environmental preservation while guaranteeing financial viability and addressing ecological problems. Emphasizing their part in agribusiness and resource management, Santini's 2017 research offers a thorough picture of ecopreneurial trends, traits, and motivations.

A growing amount of research emphasizes the need for ecopreneurship in sustainable development, particularly in resource-limited areas (Dawa et al., 2023). According to Dawa's proposed effectuation strategy, resourcefulness, adaptability, and indigenous knowledge — all of which are vital for enabling ecopreneurial businesses in emerging economies — are especially important. Guleria (2022) also created a scale to evaluate motivating elements behind ecopreneurial behavior, which is crucial for policy design meant to support ecopreneurial activity among underprivileged populations.

3.3 Welfare Plans and Socio-Economic Enhancement for Forest Dwellers

Improving the socio-economic well-being of underprivileged groups, including forest dwellers, depends much on welfare programs. Everard et al. (2020) claim that tribally governed areas of India depend on local government systems that prioritize subsistence needs while guaranteeing efficient use of resources. Likewise, Chavan et al. (2016)

recorded how the main livelihood source for forest dwellers, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), provide economic possibilities while maintaining biodiversity.

Attempts to uplift forest-dependent communities have come from government-led welfare programs, including employment-generating schemes, skill development programs, and financial inclusion initiatives. Bhushan et al. (2024) underlined, however, the difficulties in properly implementing these plans since bureaucratic inefficiencies and poor connections with local entrepreneurship models impede long-term success. Integrating ecopreneurship with welfare programs can solve these flaws by creating self-sustaining, community-driven economic opportunities that fit environmental conservation objectives.

3.4 Social Entrepreneurship and Environmentally Friendly Community

Development

Social entrepreneurship is emerging as a potent instrument for social change and sustainable development (Bansal et al., 2019). Social entrepreneurs help to empower communities, finance inclusion, and environmental sustainability by using business models that prioritize social impact over profit maximization. Vedula et al. (2021) investigated the role social and environmental entrepreneurship could play in advancing public welfare by supporting legislative changes to reward companies that follow ethical standards.

Case studies in community-based forest businesses (CFEs) show how social entrepreneurs might effectively combine economic growth with environmental protection. Examining CFEs in Cameroon, Piabuo et al. (2022) found that locally run forest businesses can operate as profitable social entrepreneurs while simultaneously reaching environmental and social goals. Similarly, Peredo et al. (2015) examined

indigenous ecotourism projects in the Bolivian Amazon to show how social entrepreneurship promotes sustainable living while safeguarding biodiversity.

3.5 Errors and Future Research Approaches

Notwithstanding increasing studies on welfare-driven development, ecopreneurship, and sustainable entrepreneurship, the literature still shows major gaps. Studies show ecopreneurship's financial and environmental advantages, but there is little direct data on how it directly affects Indian forest-dwelling populations. Furthermore, the part digital transformation plays in ecopreneurship success, especially with regard to financial access, market integration, and technological innovation in isolated tribal areas, is understudied.

4. Gaps and Future Research Directions

1. Empirical analyses evaluating the long-term effects of ecopreneurial businesses in ITDA regions.
2. Using digital financial tools — such as mobile banking and digital markets — to improve ecopreneurial success.
3. Policies allowing public-private cooperation to scale ecopreneurship in tribal areas.
4. Comparative study of success stories of ecopreneurs in many geographical and sociocultural settings.

The study of the literature highlights among forest people the transforming ability of ecopreneurship as a means of sustainable development. Combining welfare-driven projects with ecopreneur models allows policymakers to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that balances environmental preservation with economic emancipation. Strong institutional support, financial accessibility, and capacity-building initiatives are therefore required if we are to get at this. Future research should close present gaps by providing evidence-based analysis of the success of ecopreneurship in improving the

socio-economic situation of forest dwellers, so guiding policy interventions for inclusive and sustainable development.

5. Discussion

5.1 Synthesis of Findings

The literature reveals that ecopreneurship bridges economic empowerment and environmental sustainability, particularly in forest-dwelling communities. Key findings include:

- **Economic Impact:** Sustainable entrepreneurship models increase income security through forest-based industries (Santini, 2017; Neumann, 2020).
- **Social Impact:** Welfare schemes and ecopreneurship improve livelihood security, education, and healthcare access for indigenous populations (Filser et al., 2019; Bansal et al., 2019).
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Ecopreneurs promote non-timber forest product (NTFP) harvesting, agroforestry, and sustainable tourism to reduce deforestation while generating income (Chavan et al., 2016; Bhushan et al., 2024).
- **Policy Challenges:** Studies highlight bureaucratic inefficiencies in implementing government schemes for ecopreneurs, requiring better institutional support (Muñoz et al., 2018; Gupta et al., 2022).

5.2 Implications for Policy and Practice

- **Integrating Welfare Schemes with Ecopreneurial Support:** Government welfare programs should incorporate entrepreneurial training, access to finance, and market linkages for forest-based industries.
- **Developing Sustainable Business Models:** Ecopreneurs should be incentivized to adopt circular economy practices, minimizing waste and promoting eco-friendly innovations.

- **Strengthening Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** Policies should recognize and integrate traditional forest management practices to enhance community-driven sustainability.

5.3 Comparison with Existing Frameworks

Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship within forest communities is highly context-driven, relying on natural resource availability, indigenous knowledge, and social capital (Dawa et al., 2023). This distinguishes ecopreneurs from conventional entrepreneurs, emphasizing long-term ecological balance over short-term profits.

6. Conclusion

Particularly in ITDA areas, this study emphasizes the transforming power of ecopreneurship in promoting sustainable development among forest residents. The study emphasizes how environmental, social, and economic resilience can be created by sustainable entrepreneurship under the direction of welfare programs. Still, the success of such programs relies on robust institutional structures, market accessibility, and efforts at capacity building. Long-term policy effects, technology-enabled ecopreneurship, and cross-regional studies to support the pragmatic application of ecopreneurial models for sustainable development should be the main emphasis of future studies.

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