

Socio-Economic Problems and Challenges Faced by Sericulture Farmers in Karnataka: A Sociological Study

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ABSTRACT

Silk production as an art and science referred to as sericulture is documented to be of very ancient origin in India. Records indicate that it is one of the oldest countries where silk farming and weaving were done. Indications are that in its first ever practice in the world, sericulture can be traced back to 2450 B.C during the Indus Valley Civilization period in India. Still, silk farmers in Karnataka deal with a bunch of social and economic problems. Growing silkworms to make silk has been a job people in Karnataka have done for ages helping many country families make a living. Even though it can bring in money, silk farmers run into several issues that make it hard for them to stay stable and do well in life. The researcher has used questionnaire method to collect data about the prevailing conditions of the sericulture farmers in Karnataka. The economic conditions are the main issue and needs to be addressed from all stakeholders. This paper shall try to bring out these challenges and gives solutions to improve the conditions of sericulture farmers.

Key words: sericulture, socio-economic, farmers, silk

INTRODUCTION

Karnataka's silk industry shows off the state's culture and economic power. But behind the shine, silk farmers face tough times. The silk farming scene in Karnataka mixes environmental, economic, and social issues that affect many families' lives. In Karnataka's different climates, silk farmers deal with unpredictable weather that can make or break their crops. Also, pests and diseases can mess up silkworm farming. These problems, plus not enough money and changing markets, keep silk farmers stuck in a cycle of risk and money troubles.

Sericulture profile in Karnataka

Silk production through silkworm farming known as sericulture, has been a money-making business in Karnataka India for a long time. This state has made silk for hundreds of years, and silk weaving is a big part of its culture. Karnataka's good weather and long history of hand-weaving have made it a top silk maker in India. Sericulture in Karnataka started during the Vijayanagara Empire when people traded a lot of silk. Over time, this business has grown, and the government has helped make silk farming better and more modern in the state. Now, Karnataka is one of the main silk-making states in India sending a lot of silk to other countries. But, silk farmers in this area face many problems with money and society, and more people

are talking about this. New machines and farming methods have made old ways of making silk less common hurting farmers who have depended on silk making for many years. Changing market prices, not enough loans, and competition from other places that make silk have made things even harder for silk farmers in Karnataka.

Objectives

The following are the major objectives:

1. To understand the issues faced by sericulture farmers in Chitradurga District
2. To analyse the data on challenges faced by the sericulture farmers in Chitradurga District
3. To give suggestions for the betterment of the conditions of sericulture farmers in the Karnataka state

Importance and problem of the study

Sericulture gives many country families in Karnataka a way to make money. To help these silk farmers feel more secure about their finances, we need to tackle problems like unstable prices and expensive supplies. This could boost the whole area's economy. When farmers have more stable money coming in, they can put more cash into their work. This leads to making more silk and better quality silk too. In the end, this can give a lift to both the local and national economy (Vanishree, 2023).

Sericulture is a big part of life in many rural areas of Karnataka. Giving farmers better access to education and training can help them learn new skills. This can lead to better farming methods, which means more silk and less waste. Making sure farmers are healthy and treating men and women can make the whole community stronger and happier. Bugs diseases, and changing weather are big problems for silk farming. To keep silk farming going, we need to come up with good ways to deal with these issues. This includes finding ways to fight pests and diseases, and growing silkworms that can handle different types of weather. Taking care of the environment also helps make sure farming can continue for a long time and keeps natural resources safe (Ahmed, 2011).

Figuring out and tackling the problems sericulture farmers face can give policymakers useful ideas. To help farmers more use resources better, and get better results for the sericulture industry, we need to put into action specific policies and programs that deal with these issues. Some ways to step in include making silk prices more stable, offering cheaper loans, pushing for health and safety rules, and backing research and new ideas. These changes can have an impact on how well farmers do their job and how the whole sericulture scene works (Malik, 2008).

Fixing the problems in silk farming can spark bigger changes in fighting poverty helping rural areas grow, and making things fair for everyone. When silk farmers make more money, it helps the whole countryside get better. This means less people are poor, and both men and women get chances to do well. As a result small towns and villages become stronger and can take care of themselves better. It's like a chain reaction – one good thing leads to another making life better for lots of people in these areas. Even though sericulture in Karnataka can make a lot of money and give people jobs, silk farmers face a bunch of problems that make their lives harder and affect how much they can produce. These issues include silk prices that go up and down expensive stuff they need to buy, trouble getting loans they can afford, not enough education and training, health risks from using chemicals unfair treatment of women, and environmental problems like bugs, diseases, and changes in the weather. To help the silk industry grow and make farmers' lives better, we need to deal with these problems (Santosh Kumar and Dewangan, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the year 2024 in Chitradurga district of Karnataka wherein sericulture is

practiced. Since the place of residence of researcher is Ballari, for the sake of convenience the research is carried in the abovementioned district and findings are generalised. This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the socio-economic problems of sericulture farmers in Karnataka. A total of 50 farmers were surveyed and received 50 responses using a structured questionnaire that included questions about their demographics, economic conditions, social factors, and other challenges. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews to ensure clarity and accuracy. This mixed-method approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by sericulture farmers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Geetha *et. al* (2001) in their article give us some insights about how women work in the silk industry and what social and money stuff affects their involvement. Making silk, which means growing silkworms and getting silk from them, has been a big farming thing in many places in Asia. For a long time, people have thought of silk-making as something women do a lot. They have important jobs in many parts of making silk, from growing mulberry trees to spinning the silk into thread.

Dewangan and others (2011) study highlights that Sericulture plays a big role in helping rural areas grow and make money in a way that lasts. Sharma and Kapoor (2020) also pointed out that Sericulture doesn't need much money to start, uses easy methods, takes less time to get going, and brings in good money.

Raveesha, Kumar, and Bai DS (2016) wrote about how women and sericulture are connected in terms of money and society. Their article looks at how women working in sericulture changes their place in society and their money situation. It talks about things like how much money they make, if they can control their own money, and how getting jobs in sericulture helps them have more power in their lives.

Raju and others (2019) did a study on how much money silkworm farmers make when they rely on rain in Chamarajanagar district. They found out that most farmers didn't join in activities to learn new things. a few farmers sometimes took part in these learning activities, and even fewer did it more than once.

Sharma and Kapoor (2020) also looked at sericulture as a money-making business. They got their information from other sources. Silk's always been trendy, and, it's been a big part of what's hot in global fashion. It's great for farmers, business owners, and craftsmen in rural areas because it doesn't cost much to start but can make good money. It gives jobs and cash to farmers with small plots and people who don't have much.

However, the issues continue to persist among the sericulture farmers. Farmers from each region face unique challenges and socio economic issues. This paper focuses on bringing the challenges faces by the sericulture farmers of Chitradurga district of Karnataka while considering the past studies done in different regions of the country.

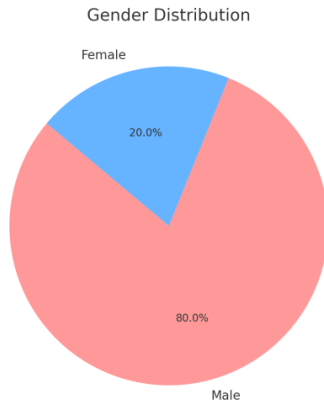
Major trends in sericulture farming issues

Through questionnaire, major problems faced by sericulture farmers in the Karnataka state were identified as:

1. Unpredictable Weather Patterns
2. Pest and Disease Infestation
3. Limited Access to Financial Resources
4. Market Volatility and Price Fluctuations
5. Socio-Economic Marginalization

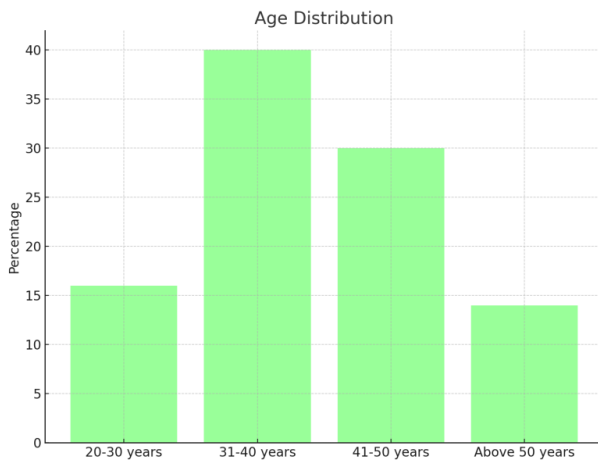
The observations regarding what the sericulture farmers in the Karnataka state feel about the above problems is given in the form of table below:

Chart 1: Demographic Information of Surveyed Farmers



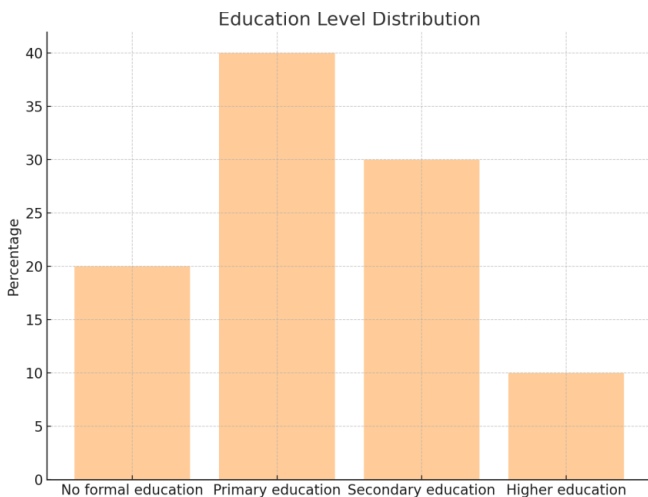
The survey shows that male make up 80% of the people who took part, while women are 20%. This big difference in gender might show wider trends in society or other things that affected who joined the survey.

Chart 2: Age distribution



When it comes to age most people (40%) are between 31 and 40 years old. The next biggest group (30%) is 41 to 50 years old. Younger farmers from 20 to 30 are 16% of the total, and people over 50 make up 14%. This mix of ages means we get different views and life experiences from the people in the survey.

Chart 3: Education level of farmers



The education levels in the sample are all over the place. A big chunk, 40% finished primary school, while 30% made it through high school. What is highly concerning is that 20% didn't get any formal schooling at all, which might mean there are some monetary and social problems related to the farmers. The smallest group just 10%, went to college or university. This mix of education levels shows that while some people can go to school, there's still a need to help others get more education. It's important to get these details about people's backgrounds so we can come up with good plans and programs that work for everyone, no matter where they're at with their schooling.

Table 1: Economic and Environmental Challenges

Challenge	Percentage	Total
Unpredictable Weather Patterns	70%	35
Pest and Disease Infestation	80%	40
Limited Access to Financial Resources	60%	30
Market Volatility and Price Fluctuations	90%	45
Socio-Economic Marginalization	70%	35

The people surveyed face many problems that have an impact on how they make a living and their quality of life. One of the biggest issues affecting 90% of those asked, is the ups and downs of the market and how prices keep changing. These shifts can mess up how much money people make and earn making it hard to plan for the future and stay stable.

Pests and diseases are also a big headache, with 80% of farmers dealing with this. This shows how farming can be hurt by nature so people need good ways to fight off pests and stop diseases to protect their crops and income. Weather, which is hard to predict, is another problem for 70% of those surveyed making things even worse. It leads to lost crops, not enough water, and messes up when farmers can plant and harvest.

Not having enough financial resources, which 60% of people said was a problem, makes these issues worse. It stops farms from buying new technology fixing things farming issues, or trying different crops that could help them deal with risks and get more yield. Also, 70% of farmers mentioned being marginalized out of society and the economy, which causes even more trouble. This means they can't get good schooling, see doctors when they need to, or move up in life. It keeps them stuck in a loop where they're always at risk and have to rely on others.

Table 2: Key factors from Interviews

Challenge	Description
Unpredictable Weather Patterns	Farmers reported frequent changes in weather, affecting crop yield and quality.
Pest and Disease Infestation	Many farmers highlighted significant losses due to pests and diseases affecting silkworms and plants.
Limited Access to Financial Resources	Farmers struggled to obtain loans and financial support, limiting their ability to invest in necessary inputs.
Market Volatility and Price Fluctuations	Farmers expressed concern about the instability of silk prices, making income unpredictable.
Socio-Economic Marginalization	Some farmers felt excluded from economic benefits and lacked access to essential services and support.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Some of the findings are:

1. Unpredictable Weather:

The biggest problem for silk farmers (70% of those asked) in Karnataka is the unpredictable weather. The state gets unseasonable rain and sometimes no rain at all, which messes up the growing of mulberry leaves, the main food for silkworms. When there aren't enough leaves, it damages how much silk they can make, and ultimately, farmers end up losing money.

2. Bugs and Diseases:

Another big problem for silk farmers (80% of those asked) is bugs and diseases that hurt silkworms and related plants. Farmers don't have enough money or know-how to fix these issues so they often end up with smaller harvests and financial crunches due to lack of return on investment.

3. Insufficient financial resources:

Getting loans and financial resources is still a big problem for silk farmers (60% of the farmers interviewed) in Karnataka. Banks don't want to give loans to farmers, which makes money problems worse for farmers. When farmers can't get loans, they can't buy new tools, good seeds, or learn the best ways to farm. This means they can't grow as much or make their farms stronger.

4. Market Volatility and Price Fluctuations:

The silk market's ups and downs make life harder for silkworm farmers (90% of the farmers we asked). When silk prices go crazy, because of supply and demand not matching up, farmers can't count on steady pay. This leaves them open to money troubles and not knowing what's coming next. As a result, farmers have a tough time getting good prices for what they grow. This keeps the cycle of being poor going and leaves silkworm farmers feeling left out.

5. Socio-Economic Marginalization:

Also, sericulture farmers (70% of the surveyed farmers) in Karnataka often face social and economic issues. These farmers from poor rural areas, run into barriers that keep them from moving up in society and getting fair chances. Their problems get worse because of differences in caste, class, and money pushing them to the edges of society and making it hard to get help and resources they need.

The study concurs with the findings of the other literatures in highlighting the major issues related to the sericulture farmers. However, since Chitradurga is semi arid region with low rainfall, faces unique challenge especially challenging weather conditions making it difficult to harvest compared to other studies previously conducted. The lack of access to financial resources is further marginalizing these farmers in Chitradurga.

Suggestions:

1. **Small Loans and Money Help:** Make it easier for silk farmers to get small loans and money help that fits what they need. This could mean lower interest rates, simpler ways to apply, and more time to pay back loans.
2. **Offer Training and Workshops:** Give full training on new silk farming methods how to deal with bugs, and using tech in farming. This could include classes on better mulberry growing silkworms that don't get sick as much, and smart ways to use water.
3. **Give Money Help:** Provide cash or grants to buy new farming tools, like machines that wind silk good

mulberry plants, and bug killers that don't harm nature.

4. **Help Farmers Team Up:** Push silk farmers to form groups to get better prices for their silk stuff together. These groups can also share money to invest in making silk more valuable, like dyeing it or weaving it.
5. **Price Forecasting and Market Info:** Set up ways to give sericulture farmers market info and price predictions when they need it. This helps them decide when and who to sell their stuff to.
6. **Better Rural Infrastructure:** Put money into building things in rural sericulture areas, like roads, places to store stuff, and ways to get to markets. Better infrastructure cuts down on moving costs and makes it easier to connect sericulture products to markets.
7. **Healthcare and School Programs:** Start programs that give sericulture farming families a chance to get cheap healthcare and go to school. This makes their lives better overall and boosts the skills of people in sericulture communities.
8. **Gender Empowerment:** Get more women to lead in silkworm farming. Teach them silkworm techniques. Make sure they can use the same tools and chances as men.
9. **Farming for Changing Weather:** Back studies to find ways to grow silkworms when the weather's unpredictable. This means growing mulberry trees that need less water, using less water to water plants, and fighting bugs without using lots of chemicals.
10. **Help from Law:** Push for rules that help silkworm farmers. These could be about minimum support price, insurance if their crops die, and using land in ways that is sustainable.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, silk farmers in Karnataka face lack of access to financial resources and also social problems that make it hard for them to make a living and get ahead. To fix these issues, we need help from people who make laws, those with a stake in the industry, and non-governmental organizations who want to help. They need to work together to make silk farming stronger and sustainable. If they focus on giving farmers better access to financial resources, helping them use new technology, and starting projects that include everyone those involved can help silk farmers beat the tough times they're facing and reach their goals for a better life.

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