
The Role of Sericulture in Promoting Rural Employment and Empowerment in Chhattisgarh

Dr. Sadhna Dixit

Assistant Professor

Govt. P.G. College Aarang, Chhattisgarh

Abstract

Sericulture, the practice of rearing silkworms for silk production, has emerged as a powerful tool for generating employment and promoting empowerment in rural India. In Chhattisgarh, where agriculture is a primary livelihood source, sericulture offers sustainable income opportunities, especially for marginalized communities. This paper explores the role of sericulture in rural employment creation, its socio-economic impact, challenges faced, and policy recommendations for strengthening the sector.

Prologue

Chhattisgarh, often referred to as the "Rice Bowl of India," is predominantly an agrarian state. However, fluctuating agricultural incomes and seasonal unemployment necessitate alternative livelihood options. Sericulture, with its low investment and high employment potential, has proven effective in bridging this gap. This research examines how sericulture has contributed to rural employment and empowerment in Chhattisgarh.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the role of sericulture in creating rural employment in Chhattisgarh.
- To evaluate the impact of sericulture on socio-economic empowerment, especially among women and tribal communities.
- To identify challenges faced by sericulture farmers.
- To suggest measures for strengthening the sericulture sector.

Research Methodology

The study is based on a mixed-methods approach:

- **Primary Data:** Surveys and interviews conducted among sericulture farmers in Bilaspur, Bastar, Raigarh, and Dantewada districts.
- **Secondary Data:** Reports from the Department of Sericulture, Government of Chhattisgarh, research papers, and policy documents.
- **Sample Size:** 200 farmers engaged in mulberry and tasar silk cultivation.

Sericulture in Chhattisgarh: An Overview

Chhattisgarh is known for its **Tasar silk** production, a natural wild silk traditionally reared by tribal communities. The state's climatic conditions, forest cover, and traditional knowledge base make it ideal for sericulture activities.

Major types of silk produced:

- **Tasar Silk** (wild silk)
- **Mulberry Silk** (domesticated silkworms)
- **Eri and Muga Silk** (limited scale)

Government initiatives such as the "Mukhyamantri Resham Vikas Yojana" aim to promote sericulture and enhance income among rural families.

Analysis of Survey Data

Table & Graph - 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 25	20	10%
26–35	60	30%
36–45	65	32.5%
46–55	35	17.5%
Above 55	20	10%
Total	200	100%

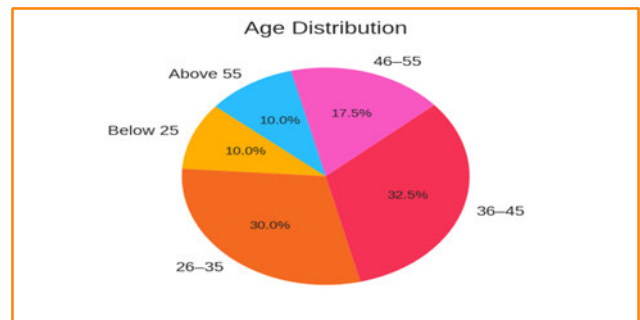


Table & Graph - 2: Gender-wise Participation

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	80	40%
Female	120	60%
Total	200	100%

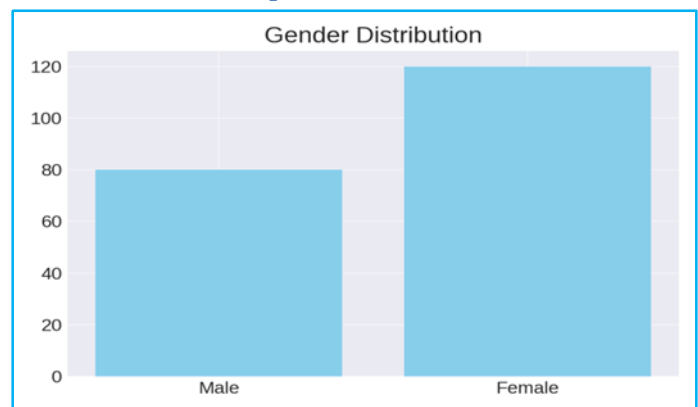


Table & Graph - 3: Educational Qualification

Qualification Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	40	20%
Primary	70	35%
Secondary	50	25%
Higher Secondary	30	15%
Graduate and Above	10	5%
Total	200	100%

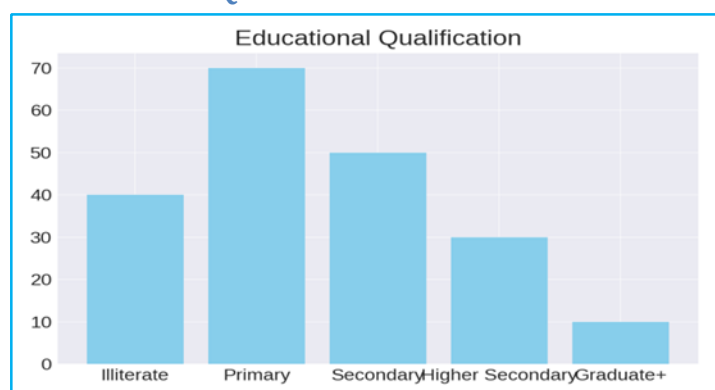


Table & Graph - 4: Years of Experience in Sericulture

Experience Years	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	20	10%
1–3 years	80	40%
4–6 years	60	30%
More than 6 years	40	20%
Total	200	100%

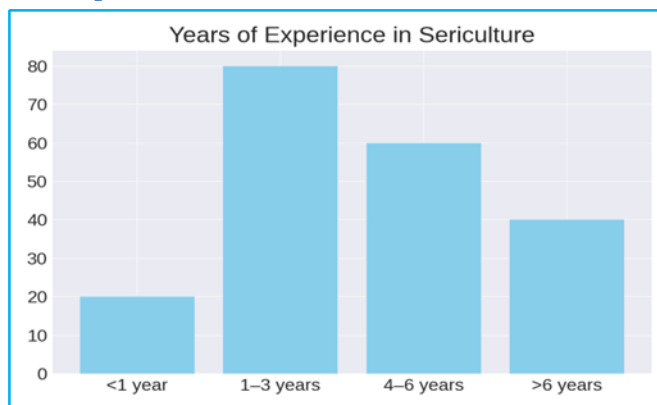


Table & Graph - 5: Type of Silk Cultivated

Type of Silk	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Tasar	120	60%
Mulberry	60	30%
Eri	15	7.5%
Muga	5	2.5%
Total	200	100%

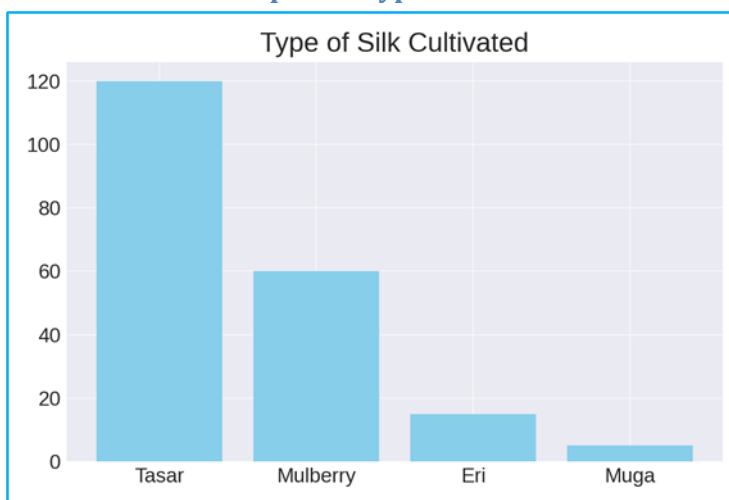


Table & Graph - 6: Annual Income from Sericulture

Income Range (₹)	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than ₹20,000	30	15%
₹20,001–₹40,000	90	45%
₹40,001–₹60,000	50	25%
Above ₹60,000	30	15%
Total	200	100%

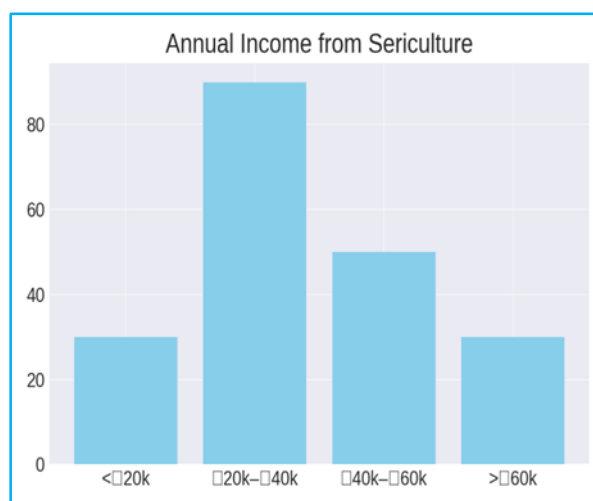


Table & Graph - 7: Year-Round Employment through Sericulture

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	150	75%
No	50	25%
Total	200	100%

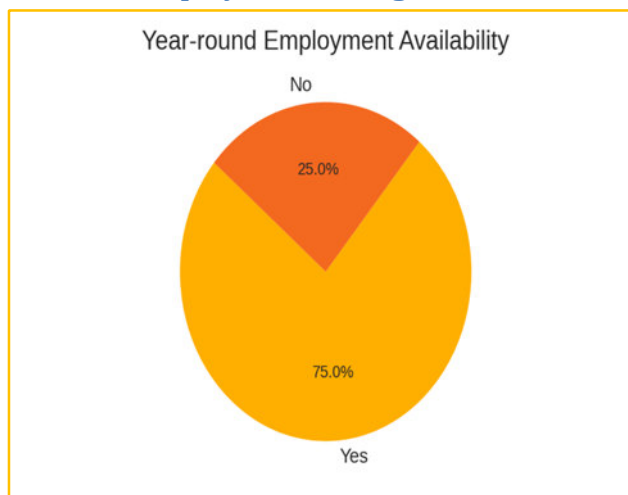


Table & Graph - 8: Improvement in Family Income After Sericulture

Level of Improvement	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Significant	90	45%
Moderate	60	30%
Slight	40	20%
No Improvement	10	5%
Total	200	100%

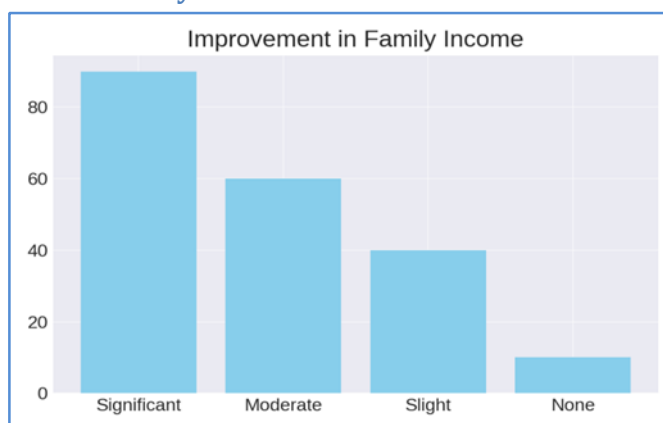


Table & Graph - 9: Family Members Involved in Sericulture Activities

Family Members	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male Members	40	20%
Female Members	80	40%
Both	80	40%
Total	200	100%

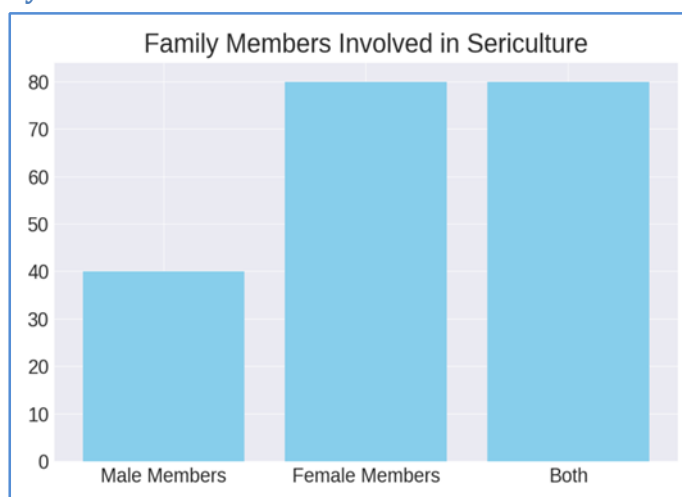
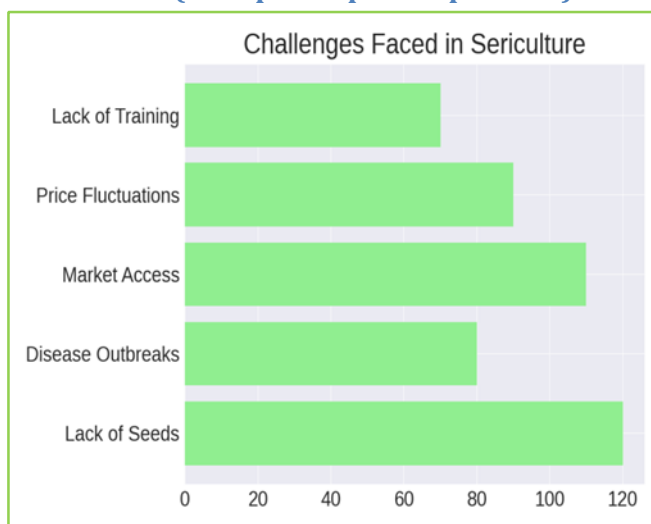


Table & Graph - 10: Challenges Faced in Sericulture (Multiple responses possible)

Challenges	No. of Respondents Reporting	Percentage (%)
Lack of Quality Seeds	120	60%
Disease Outbreaks	80	40%
Market Access Issues	110	55%
Price Fluctuations	90	45%
Lack of Training	70	35%



Findings

- Majority (75%) gained **year-round**

employment through sericulture.

- **Female participation** (60%) is higher, showing strong women empowerment.
- **60%** of respondents cultivate **Tasar silk**, aligning with Chhattisgarh's traditional strengths.
- About **45%** reported **significant income improvement** post sericulture involvement.
- Main challenges include **quality seed shortage** (60%) and **market access problems** (55%).

Role of Sericulture in Promoting Rural Employment

- **Employment Generation across the Value Chain-** Sericulture involves activities like mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, cocoon harvesting, silk reeling, spinning, and weaving- providing year-round employment.
- **Women and Tribal Empowerment- Women's Participation:** Women constitute over 60% of the workforce in cocoon rearing and silk weaving activities.
- **Tribal Involvement:** Sericulture fits well with the traditional lifestyle of tribal communities, especially in Bastar and Jashpur regions.

Economic Impact

Average monthly income of a sericulture farmer (small scale) has increased by 30-40% compared to traditional rain-fed agriculture.

Empowerment through Sericulture

- **Financial Independence-** Access to stable income has led to increased savings, better household nutrition, and investment in children's education.
- **Skill Development-** Training programs on silkworm rearing, disease management, and weaving techniques have enhanced technical skills among rural youth.
- **Social Status-** Women and tribal farmers engaged in sericulture have reported higher participation in village decision-making bodies like Panchayats and Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Challenges in Sericulture Development in Chhattisgarh

- **Climate Vulnerabilities:** Dependence on seasonal patterns impacts cocoon yield.
- **Market Access Issues:** Lack of direct market linkages and dependence on middlemen.

- **Low Technological Adoption:** Limited use of modern techniques like disease-resistant silkworm breeds or mechanized reeling units.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Shortage of cold storage, silk processing centers, and training institutes.

Policy Recommendations

- **Skill Enhancement:** Establish specialized sericulture training centers at the block level.
- **Infrastructure Support:** Develop cocoon markets, silk parks, and cold storage units.
- **Financial Assistance:** Subsidies for buying quality seeds, rearing equipment, and low-interest credit facilities.
- **Women-Centric Programs:** Special schemes targeting women's SHGs for silk weaving and marketing.
- **Technology Transfer:** Promote disease-resistant varieties and integrated pest management techniques.

Conclusion

Sericulture holds tremendous potential in Chhattisgarh as a sustainable livelihood option, particularly for rural women and tribal communities. It not only generates year-round employment but also fosters socio-economic empowerment. However, to fully realize its potential, concerted efforts in training, infrastructure development, market integration, and policy support are crucial. Strengthening sericulture can significantly contribute to rural development and inclusive growth in the state.

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