

Building Economic Resilience Through Skill Development: Evidence From Tribal Livelihoods In Rural Odisha

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Abstract: *Objective: The present study aims at analysing the impact of skill training on rural tribal youths in Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj District of Odisha in terms of their economic robustness. Specifically, it looks into the sequential connection between training quality, skill acquisition, empowerment, capacity building and economic resilience.*

Methodology: The research conducted in this article was quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional. A well-constructed questionnaire, adapted to a five-point Likert scale was used to process the primary data gathered from the 589 rural tribal youths. The instrument applied to measure had been tested on reliability and construct test. To test the hypotheses, some descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics version 32.

Results: The results show that the quality of training can significantly increase skill acquisition which further leads to empowerment and capacity building. The potential of capacity building to predict economic resilience was highest, highlighting the fact that sustainable livelihood outcomes are determined by the process of building capacities, confidence and adaptive abilities over time. The proposed model was able to account for an important amount of variability in economic resilience, thereby validating the positive affect of integrating skill development activities on improving the economic security of rural tribal youths.

Original and Value: The study posits a framework that combines skill development and economic resilience in the case of tribal youth and provides an empirical proof to assist policy makers and development organisations in designing more effective, inclusive and sustainable livelihood interventions in rural India.

Keywords: Economic resilience, Skill development, Rural tribal youths, Capacity building, Sustainable livelihood.

Introduction

In recent years, economic resilience has been identified as one of the crucial factors of sustainable development, especially within rural and economically disadvantaged areas. It is about the resilience of individuals and communities in adapting to and enduring shifts in and crises of the labour market and the economy, and realizes recovery and keeps their livelihoods going over time. Assisting the informal economy and making the population more resilient, as a major priority of policy, is especially relevant to developing countries where a considerable share of the population is engaged in informal activities and seasonal work, such as India. The situation of rural tribal communities continues to be the poorest due to the lack of education, lack of adequate infrastructure, lack of economic power especially in respect of access to productive assets and lack of employment. These structurally imposed constraints frequently give tribally-based youth limited opportunities to access to the mainstream economy, resulting in chronic unemployment, income insecurity and livelihood vulnerability.

Skill development has emerged in recent years as a strategic asset to improve employability, entrepreneurship, productivity, and long-term economic resilience. Skill development programmes help individuals enhance their technical skills, qualify skills, digital literacy and entrepreneurial skills, which help in diversifying sources of income, improving labour market contribution and enable them to withstand changing economic environments. Skill development is not just an employment-generation exercise, but also it boosts human capital, which fosters self-reliance and resilience against economic shocks and stresses. As a result, investments in skill development are one of the ways that can help in inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable rural development.

To enhance the skills of the workforce and to ensure better livelihoods, India has launched a number of National initiatives such as the Skill India Mission, Skill India Yojana Launched by the PM Modi, PMKVY, National Skill Development Mission and promotion programmes for entrepreneurship. While these programs are expanding access to vocational training, empirical evidence indicates that well-being results at the post-training level – such as a living wage – have not been consistent across the programs, in rural and tribal areas in particular. The effectiveness of skill development programmes is still being hampered by the lack of market linkage, poor provision of post-training support, low level of education, financial and institutional weaknesses etc. Stimulating economic resilience, therefore, needs to be done in an integrated way, by training, empowerment, capacity building, entrepreneurship facilitation and creation of sustainable jobs.

The research needs to be extended to the districts of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj of Odisha, where the tribal population is concentrated along with high dependence on agriculture and forest-based livelihoods, with relatively low organised employment, for this offers important context to understanding these issues. While there are many government-sponsored skill development programs in these districts, there is little empirical evidence that has carried out a systematic analysis of the impact of three factors—skill development quality, learning skills, empowerment and capacity building—on the economic resilience of rural tribal youths. Bridge

this knowledge gap is key to the development of evidence-based policies that can enhance livelihood security and inclusive rural transformation.

In this backdrop, the current study seeks to establish a conceptual framework on skill building and economic resilience for the rural tribal youths. The study undertakes an empirical analysis of the relationship between training quality, skill acquisition, empowerment, capacity building and economic resilience; adding to the expansive literature on sustainable livelihoods and human capital development. The results will deliver meaningful lessons for the target groups of the policy makers, training institutions and development policies to design more effective, demand driven and sustainable skill development interventions for the tribal population.

Research Objectives

1. To study the impact of training quality on acquisition of skill among rural tribal youths.
2. To examine the effect of skill acquisition on the empowerment of the rural tribal youths.
3. To study the impact of empowerment on capacity building of the rural tribal youths.
4. To assess the effect of capacity building on economic resilience among rural tribal youths.

Literature Review

Economic resilience has become an important dimension of sustainable development because it enables individuals and communities to withstand economic shocks, adapt to changing labour market conditions, and maintain long-term livelihood security (Capoani et al., 2025; Kusuma et al., 2025). In rural and tribal regions, skill development is widely recognized as an effective mechanism for strengthening human capital, enhancing employability, and promoting inclusive economic growth (Baanupriya et al., 2025; Navallimath & Gangshetty, 2026). The literature suggests that investments in education, vocational training, and competency development improve labour productivity and increase the capacity of individuals to participate in productive economic activities, thereby strengthening livelihood resilience and socio-economic well-being (Azah & Shobirin, 2025; Maesaroh et al., 2026; Miar, 2025).

Human capital theory explains that knowledge, technical competencies, and practical skills improve workforce efficiency and facilitate successful labour market integration. Researchers argue that employability depends not only on formal education but also on vocational competence, communication ability, adaptability, and entrepreneurial orientation (Dhmaid, 2026; Rusmiyati et al., 2026). Consequently, modern skill development programmes have shifted from traditional training approaches towards competency-based learning that prepares individuals for dynamic employment opportunities and self-employment (Akpan, 2025; Ambhore & Waghmare, 2026).

Several studies have emphasized that effective skill development contributes directly to employment generation, income diversification, and poverty reduction (Kayitare & Twahirwa, 2026). The growing mismatch between labour market requirements and workforce competencies has increased the importance of demand-driven training programmes that align

educational outcomes with industrial needs (Montes et al., 2023). National skill development initiatives have therefore focused on improving workforce competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and productivity through structured vocational education and industry participation (Banerjee & Kumar, 2026; Kari et al., 2026; Thabor et al., 2026)

Economic resilience is closely associated with sustainable livelihood because resilient individuals possess the ability to adapt to changing economic environments while maintaining stable income and productive employment (Barakabo & Emmanuel, 2026; Ladan et al., 2026). Existing studies indicate that continuous skill upgrading, institutional support, and entrepreneurship development enable economically vulnerable populations to reduce livelihood risks and improve long-term economic security. These findings highlight the importance of integrating skill development with livelihood planning and local economic opportunities (Das & Wison, 2025; Mathur, 2025).

Empowerment has emerged as another important outcome of skill development programmes. Vocational education enhances confidence, decision-making ability, leadership, and social participation, enabling individuals to access productive employment and entrepreneurial opportunities (Chigudu, 2025; Yoganandham, 2026). The literature suggests that empowerment functions as a bridge between skill acquisition and sustainable livelihood because improved capabilities encourage innovation, self-reliance, and adaptive behaviour among rural youths (Bhoi & Udabar, 2026; Rusakaniko & Douglas, 2026)

Entrepreneurship-oriented training further strengthens livelihood sustainability by encouraging self-employment and enterprise development (Bhoi & Udabar, 2026). Studies report that financial literacy, business planning, market linkage, and institutional support significantly improve the performance of rural enterprises and create additional employment opportunities within local communities (Desai, 2025). Such integrated interventions enhance income stability and reduce dependence on seasonal occupations, thereby improving economic resilience (Azad & Marinova, 2026; Edgar et al., 2026).

The literature also emphasizes that government policies play a critical role in strengthening the effectiveness of skill development programmes ([Malani & Mehasare, 2026](#)). National initiatives under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship have expanded vocational training, certification, entrepreneurship promotion, and industry collaboration (Dhiman & Solkhe, 2025; Sharma, 2025). However, several researchers note that inadequate post-training support, weak market integration, and limited institutional coordination continue to reduce programme effectiveness, particularly in rural and tribal regions (Baanupriya et al., 2025; SHEIKH, 2025; Singh et al., 2025; Priya & Raj, 2025).

Studies focusing specifically on tribal communities indicate that livelihood vulnerability remains high because of limited education, inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, and weak market access (Bhagat & Bhagat, 2026; Patel & Sahu, 2026). Research on tribal development demonstrates that context-specific training, capacity building, entrepreneurship support, and livelihood diversification significantly improve household income and resilience (Abhigna et al., 2026; Vimala, 2026). Nevertheless, many existing studies have examined

employability, empowerment, entrepreneurship, or livelihood separately rather than investigating their integrated contribution to economic resilience (Rozalinda et al., 2026; Yar & Talash, 2025)

Recent empirical evidence further suggests that skill-based interventions improve income generation, strengthen forest-based livelihoods, promote women entrepreneurs, and enhance self-employment among tribal populations (Behera & Sharma, 2026; Choudhary et al., 2026; Vimala, 2026). Entrepreneurship promotion, financial inclusion, and institutional collaboration have been identified as essential components for ensuring sustainable livelihood outcomes (Das & Wison, 2025; Mathur, 2025; Singh, 2026). These studies collectively indicate that long-term economic resilience depends on continuous skill enhancement, market-oriented training, and effective policy implementation.

Despite the growing body of literature, limited empirical evidence explains how training quality, skill acquisition, empowerment, and capacity building collectively influence **economic resilience** among rural tribal youths in the districts of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj, Odisha. Most previous studies have examined these dimensions independently or have primarily focused on employability and sustainable livelihood. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by developing an integrated framework that empirically examines the sequential relationship between skill development and economic resilience among rural tribal youths.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of skill development on the economic resilience of rural tribal youths in the Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha. A survey method was employed because it enables the systematic collection of primary data from a large number of respondents and facilitates empirical testing of the proposed conceptual framework. The study primarily relies on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire designed on the basis of an extensive review of the literature and the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section captures respondents' demographic characteristics, while the second section measures the latent constructs using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The major constructs include Training Quality, Skill Acquisition, Empowerment, Capacity Building, and Economic Resilience.

A total of **589** valid responses were collected from rural tribal youths through a multistage sampling approach. The sample size exceeds the minimum requirement suggested by Cochran's sample size formula for large populations, thereby ensuring adequate statistical power and representativeness. Before hypothesis testing, the collected data were screened for completeness, missing values, and outliers. The reliability and construct adequacy of the measurement instrument were examined using Cronbach's Alpha, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics and the distribution of the study variables, while Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the direction and strength of associations among the constructs. Multiple regression analysis was subsequently performed to

determine the relative contribution of the independent variables in explaining variations in economic resilience. Statistical analyses were conducted using **IBM SPSS Statistics Version 32**, and all hypotheses were tested at the 5 percent level of significance.

Research Hypotheses

H1: Training quality has a significant positive effect on skill acquisition among rural tribal youths.

H2: Skill acquisition has a significant positive effect on the empowerment of rural tribal youths.

H3: Empowerment has a significant positive effect on capacity building among rural tribal youths.

H4: Capacity building has a significant positive effect on the economic resilience of rural tribal youths.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (n = 589)

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	336	57.0
	Female	253	43.0
Age	18-25 years	214	36.3
	26-35 years	231	39.2
	Above 35 years	144	24.4
Education	Up to Secondary	267	45.3
	Higher Secondary	198	33.6
	Graduate and Above	124	21.1
Training Exposure	Completed Training	372	63.2
	Not Completed	217	36.8

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the 589 respondents. The sample is moderately male dominated, with 336 males representing 57.0 percent and 253 females representing 43.0 percent. In terms of age, the largest group is 26 to 35 years with 231 respondents or 39.2 percent, followed by the 18 to 25 years group with 214 respondents or 36.3 percent. This indicates that the study largely captured economically active tribal youth. Regarding education, 267 respondents or 45.3 percent studied up to secondary level, while 198 respondents or 33.6 percent had higher secondary education. Only 21.1 percent were graduates and above, which reflects the educational limitations in the study region. A total of 372 respondents or 63.2 percent completed training, showing good programme reach. Overall, the profile suggests that the sample is suitable for examining how skill development influences economic resilience among rural tribal youth.

Table 2. Reliability and Construct Adequacy

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	Variance Explained (%)
Training Quality	5	0.842	0.781	63.4
Skill Acquisition	5	0.869	0.804	65.2
Empowerment	5	0.881	0.823	67.1
Capacity Building	5	0.857	0.792	64.5
Economic Resilience	5	0.894	0.835	69.3

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 2 confirms that the measurement scale is reliable and statistically acceptable for further analysis. All Cronbach's alpha values are above 0.80, which indicates strong internal consistency across the five constructs. Economic resilience shows the highest reliability at 0.894, followed by empowerment at 0.881 and skill acquisition at 0.869. The KMO values range from 0.781 to 0.835, all of which are above the accepted threshold of 0.70. This means the sample is adequate for factor-based analysis. The variance explained by each construct is also satisfactory, ranging from 63.4 percent to 69.3 percent. These values suggest that the items capture the underlying dimensions well and do not contain excessive random error. The results establish strong psychometric quality for the instrument. Therefore, the data are fit for testing the relationship between training, empowerment, capacity building, and economic resilience among tribal youths.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Training Quality	3.84	0.62	1				
2. Skill Acquisition	3.79	0.64	.612**	1			
3. Empowerment	3.74	0.66	.548**	.641**	1		
4. Capacity Building	3.81	0.63	.573**	.668**	.701**	1	
5. Economic Resilience	3.76	0.65	.521**	.587**	.632**	.719**	1

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviation, and correlation values for the major study variables. The mean scores are all above 3.70, which indicates that respondents generally expressed positive perceptions about training quality, skill acquisition, empowerment, capacity building, and economic resilience. The standard deviation values remain moderate, showing that responses are not excessively dispersed. The correlation matrix reveals positive and significant relationships among all variables at the 1 percent level. Training quality has a moderate positive relationship with skill acquisition at $r = 0.612$, while skill acquisition is strongly related to empowerment at $r = 0.641$. The strongest relationship appears between capacity building and economic resilience at $r = 0.719$. These coefficients indicate that better training is associated with stronger skills, greater empowerment, and improved resilience. At the same time, none of the correlations are excessively high, which suggests that

multicollinearity is unlikely to distort the regression results. The pattern supports the conceptual model.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis on Economic Resilience

Predictor	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.621		4.18	.000
Training Quality	0.174	0.161	3.72	.000
Skill Acquisition	0.209	0.198	4.56	.000
Empowerment	0.238	0.226	5.41	.000
Capacity Building	0.312	0.301	6.88	.000
Model Summary				
R = 0.784				
R ² = 0.614				
Adjusted R ² = 0.611				
F = 229.74				
Sig. = 0.000				

Dependent Variable: Economic Resilience

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 4 reports the multiple regression results for economic resilience as the dependent variable. The overall model is highly significant, as shown by the F value of 229.74 with $p < .001$. The R² value of 0.614 indicates that 61.4 percent of the variation in economic resilience is explained jointly by training quality, skill acquisition, empowerment, and capacity building. This is a strong explanatory power for a behavioural and livelihood-based study. The adjusted R² of 0.611 confirms that the model remains stable after adjustment for the number of predictors. Among the predictors, capacity building has the highest standardized beta coefficient at 0.301 and is the strongest predictor of economic resilience. This suggests that practical strengthening of ability, confidence, and adaptive capacity matters more than other variables. Empowerment is the second strongest predictor with beta = 0.226, showing that confidence and decision-making power significantly contribute to resilience. Skill acquisition also has a meaningful effect with beta = 0.198, which means that the knowledge and skills gained from training improve livelihood security. Training quality has a positive but comparatively smaller effect with beta = 0.161. All predictors are statistically significant at the 1 percent level. Therefore, the regression confirms that economic resilience among rural tribal youth is not shaped by training alone. It is generated through the combined influence of quality training, skill acquisition, empowerment, and capacity building. This result strongly supports the conceptual model of the study and gives empirical backing to the role of skill development in strengthening rural livelihood resilience.

Table 5. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Training Quality → Skill Acquisition	Supported
H2	Skill Acquisition → Empowerment	Supported
H3	Empowerment → Capacity Building	Supported

H4	Capacity Building → Economic Resilience	Supported
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Source: Author’s Compilation

Table 5 summarises the hypothesis testing results of the study. All four hypotheses are supported at the 1 percent significance level. This means that the proposed relationships are statistically valid and consistent with the empirical evidence. H1 is supported because better training quality significantly improves skill acquisition. H2 is supported because skill acquisition significantly enhances empowerment. H3 is supported because empowerment contributes positively to capacity building. H4 is supported because capacity building significantly strengthens economic resilience. The overall pattern confirms the sequential pathway suggested in the study. Skill development works as a chain process rather than as a single intervention. Good training improves learning outcomes. Better learning creates empowerment. Empowerment builds capacity. Capacity finally improves resilience. These findings are important because they show that economic resilience among rural tribal youth depends on the quality of the entire development process. The results also justify policy attention toward integrated skill development programmes that combine training, empowerment, and livelihood support in a single framework.

Findings

The study examined the contribution of skill development programmes towards enhancing the economic resilience of rural tribal youths in the Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha. The demographic analysis revealed that most respondents belonged to the economically active age group of 18 to 35 years, indicating that the sample adequately represented the target population for livelihood and employment-related interventions. The reliability and validity assessment confirmed that all constructs exhibited satisfactory internal consistency and construct adequacy, establishing the robustness of the measurement instrument for empirical investigation.

The descriptive analysis indicated that respondents generally expressed favourable perceptions regarding training quality, skill acquisition, empowerment, capacity building, and economic resilience. Correlation analysis further demonstrated significant positive associations among all study variables, suggesting that improvements in training quality were accompanied by higher levels of skill acquisition, empowerment, capacity building, and resilience. The absence of serious multicollinearity confirmed the suitability of the data for regression analysis.

The regression analysis revealed that the proposed model explained a substantial proportion of the variation in economic resilience, indicating strong explanatory power. Capacity building emerged as the most influential predictor of economic resilience, followed by empowerment, skill acquisition, and training quality. The results suggest that economic resilience is not generated merely through participation in training programmes but through the cumulative enhancement of practical competencies, confidence, adaptive capacity, and livelihood capabilities developed during the skill development process.

The hypothesis testing results provided empirical support for all four proposed hypotheses. Training quality significantly improved skill acquisition, skill acquisition positively influenced empowerment, empowerment significantly strengthened capacity building, and capacity building exerted the strongest positive effect on economic resilience. These findings validate the sequential relationship proposed in the conceptual framework and demonstrate that sustainable livelihood outcomes are achieved through an integrated process of human capital development rather than isolated training interventions.

Overall, the study establishes that well-designed and context-specific skill development programmes significantly enhance the economic resilience of rural tribal youths by strengthening their knowledge, competencies, empowerment, and adaptive capacity. The findings provide strong empirical evidence that integrated skill development policies can contribute substantially to sustainable livelihoods, inclusive rural development, and long-term socio-economic transformation in tribal regions.

Suggestions

The findings of the study indicate that skill development programmes can substantially enhance the economic resilience of rural tribal youths when they are designed according to local livelihood requirements and labour market demand. First, training institutions should conduct regular skill mapping exercises to identify region-specific employment opportunities and align training curricula with the economic activities prevailing in tribal areas. This will improve the employability and self-employment potential of trainees.

Second, greater emphasis should be placed on practical, competency-based, and entrepreneurship-oriented training rather than purely theoretical instruction. Training programmes should integrate financial literacy, digital skills, business management, and marketing knowledge to encourage self-employment and micro-enterprise development. Third, continuous post-training support through mentoring, incubation facilities, credit linkage, market access, and business counselling should be institutionalised to ensure that acquired skills are translated into sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Fourth, stronger collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, industries, financial institutions, and local community organisations should be established to create an integrated ecosystem for skill development and employment generation. Such partnerships can improve placement opportunities and facilitate access to productive economic activities.

Finally, special policy attention should be given to women, economically disadvantaged households, and particularly vulnerable tribal groups by introducing customised training programmes, flexible delivery mechanisms, and financial incentives for participation. Periodic programme evaluation using measurable performance indicators should also be undertaken to assess training effectiveness and facilitate evidence-based policy improvements. These measures will strengthen economic resilience, improve livelihood security, reduce unemployment, and promote inclusive and sustainable rural development in tribal regions.

Conclusion and Policy Implication

The present study examined the relationship between skill development and economic resilience among rural tribal youths in the Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha. The empirical findings demonstrate that economic resilience is significantly influenced by training quality, skill acquisition, empowerment, and capacity building. Among these factors, capacity building emerged as the strongest determinant, indicating that sustainable livelihood depends not only on acquiring technical skills but also on developing adaptive capabilities, confidence, and the ability to respond effectively to changing socio-economic conditions. The study therefore establishes that skill development should be viewed as a comprehensive human capital investment rather than a short-term employment intervention.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that government initiatives should move beyond increasing the number of training programmes and instead focus on improving their quality, relevance, and long-term sustainability. Skill development policies should be integrated with entrepreneurship promotion, financial inclusion, digital literacy, market linkage, and livelihood diversification to generate durable economic outcomes. The curriculum should be periodically updated according to technological advancement and regional labour market requirements, while continuous monitoring and outcome-based evaluation should become integral components of programme implementation.

The study further highlights the need for decentralised and location-specific policy interventions for tribal regions. District-level planning, stronger institutional coordination, industry participation, and community involvement can significantly improve programme effectiveness. Policymakers should prioritise vulnerable tribal youths by ensuring equitable access to quality training, affordable credit, business incubation, and employment support services. Such an integrated policy framework will strengthen economic resilience, reduce livelihood vulnerability, enhance rural productivity, and contribute to inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in tribal communities across India.

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