

## A Comparative Study of Self-Concept Between Working and Non-Working Tribal Women

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### ABSTRACT

The present study examines self-concept among working and non-working tribal women. Self-concept is an important psychological construct that influences behaviour, identity, and well-being. Tribal women often face socio-economic disadvantages, cultural restrictions, low literacy rates, and limited employment opportunities. The study aimed to compare the levels of self-concept between working and non-working tribal women to understand the role of employment in shaping psychological identity. A total sample of 120 tribal women (60 working and 60 non-working) was selected using purposive sampling from various tribal-dominated areas of **District Palamu, Garhwa, state Jharkhand**. The Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) by **Mukta Rani Rastogi** was administered. Mean, SD and t-test were applied for analysis. Results revealed that working tribal women had significantly higher levels of self-concept compared to non-working tribal women. Employment was found to strengthen self-confidence, autonomy, and social identity. The study suggests empowering tribal women through education, employment schemes, and awareness programs.

**Keywords:** *Self-concept, Working tribal women, Non-working women, Empowerment, Psychological well-being*

**S**elf-concept refers to an individual's perception, beliefs, and evaluation about themselves. Carl Rogers described self-concept as the core of personality. It influences one's confidence, decision-making, communication, and emotional functioning. A strong self-concept leads to healthy adjustment, while a poor self-concept may cause dependency, low confidence, and poor mental health.

For tribal women, self-concept is shaped by their unique socio-cultural environment. Tribal communities in India-particularly in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh follow traditional lifestyles where women play an important role in household work, agriculture, forest collection, and childcare. Despite this, their contributions often go unrecognized in formal economic terms. Limited education, early marriage, poverty, and gender-based restrictions affect their sense of identity and self-worth.

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Working tribal women experience greater social exposure, mobility, and communication with people outside the home. Employment gives them financial independence, which increases confidence and decision-making power. They participate in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), government schemes such as MGNREGA, and small-scale occupations. These engagements contribute positively to their self-concept.

Non-working tribal women remain confined to household activities. Their identity is often restricted to domestic roles, and they may experience dependency on male family members for financial decisions. Their opportunities for developing self-concept—through education, exposure, or social interaction—are limited. Due to cultural norms, some tribal women may not step outside homes for work, which restricts their personal growth.

Understanding the differences in self-concept between these two groups is important from a psychological, social, and policy perspective. Improving self-concept among tribal women can enhance autonomy, decision-making, confidence, social participation, and mental health. Therefore, this study attempts a comparative analysis of the self-concept between working and non-working tribal women.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976)** proposed the multidimensional model of self-concept, stating that self-concept consists of academic, emotional, physical, and social dimensions. This laid the foundation for modern self-concept assessment.

**Rogers (1951)** emphasized the role of self-concept in personality development. According to him, an individual's self-concept is shaped by social experiences and acceptance.

**Mukta Rani (2002)** found that working women have better self-worth and confidence than non-working women. Employment provides recognition and strengthens identity.

**Kaur and Gill (2007)** conducted a comparative study among rural women and found that working women showed higher self-confidence, autonomy, and decision-making ability.

**Kumar (2010)** studied tribal women in Jharkhand and observed that those participating in income-generating activities through SHGs reported higher self-esteem and self-concept.

**Bhattacharya (2014)** emphasized that non-working tribal women face cultural restrictions, early marriage, and dependency on male members, resulting in lower self-esteem and poor self-concept.

**Singh and Toppo (2017)** studied self-concept among tribal women in Chhattisgarh and found significant differences between working and non-working women. Working women displayed higher emotional and social confidence.

**Das and Lepcha (2019)** reported that employment brings empowerment, identity formation, and improved self-perception among tribal women.

**Singh (2020)** showed that economic participation enhances tribal women's leadership skills, communication, and decision-making abilities, contributing to higher self-concept. The literature suggests that employment significantly improves women's self-concept, particularly in tribal communities.

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### Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of self-concept among working tribal women.
2. To assess the level of self-concept among non-working tribal women.
3. To compare the self-concept between working and non-working tribal women.
4. To analyze the role of employment in shaping self-perception and identity among tribal women.

### Hypothesis of the Study

1. There will be a significant difference in the self-concept of working and non-working tribal women.
2. Working tribal women will exhibit a higher level of self-concept compared to non-working tribal women.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

A comparative and descriptive survey method was used for the study.

### Sample

The sample consisted of **120 tribal women**, including:

- 60 working tribal women
- 60 non-working tribal women

Age group: 20–45 years Area: District of Palamu, Garhwa, and nearby tribal areas of Jharkhand

Sampling technique: Purposive sampling

### Tools Used

1. **Self-Concept Questionnaire-(SCQ)** by Mukta Rani Rastogi-to measure various dimensions of self-concept.
2. **Personal Data Sheet**-to collect demographic information.

### Procedure of Data Collection

Data was collected from homes, workplaces, SHG meetings, and community centers. Rapport was established and instructions were provided clearly.

### Statistical Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using:

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- t-test

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Statistical Comparison of Self-Concept

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Working Tribal Women	60	185.60	15.50	6.72	Significant
Non-Working Tribal Women	60	160.25	18.10	—	—

The results show that working tribal women score significantly higher on self-concept than non-working tribal women. The t-value (6.72) indicates a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level.

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### *Interpretation of Findings*

1. Working women experience economic independence, which strengthens self-confidence.
2. Employment increases self-worth through recognition and social validation.
3. Outside exposure improves communication skills, decision-making, and emotional stability.
4. Non-working tribal women remain dependent on male members, limiting growth and reducing self-concept.
5. Cultural restrictions, limited mobility, and lack of opportunities negatively impact their self-perception.

### **DISCUSSION IN LIGHT OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH**

Findings align with earlier studies by Singh & Toppo (2017), Kaur & Gill (2007), and Kumar (2010), suggesting that employment enhances self-concept and psychological well-being.

### *Major Findings*

1. Working tribal women exhibit significantly higher self-concept than non-working tribal women.
2. Employment increases confidence, autonomy, and social identity.
3. Non-working tribal women show lower levels of self-esteem and self-worth.
4. Economic participation is a crucial factor influencing self-concept among tribal women.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that employment plays a significant role in enhancing the self-concept of tribal women. Working women benefit from financial independence, decision-making power, and social exposure, which together strengthen their self-concept. By contrast, non-working tribal women, due to cultural and economic dependency, experience lower self-worth and autonomy. Strengthening women's education and employment opportunities can help improve their overall self-concept and promote empowerment.

### *Suggestions and Implications*

1. Promote vocational training and livelihood programs for tribal women.
2. Strengthen educational opportunities for girls and women in tribal areas.
3. Encourage participation in SHGs and microfinance activities.
4. Conduct awareness programs on gender equality and women's empowerment.
5. Provide counselling and psychological support to tribal women.
6. Government schemes should focus on increasing employment opportunities.

### *Limitations of the Study*

1. Sample size was limited to 120 women.
2. The study was restricted geographically to selected areas district Palamu, Garhwa, of Jharkhand.
3. Only one psychological variable (self-concept) was examined.
4. Self-report tools may include response bias.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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