

## International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 9; Issue 3; March 2026; Page No. 472-474

Received: 02-01-2026  
Accepted: 09-02-2026

Indexed Journal  
Peer Reviewed Journal

### Impact of sericulture on women's livelihood and empowerment: A study at Mysuru and Mandya district in Karnataka

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2026.v9.i3g.3425>

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#### Abstract

Sericulture has emerged as an important agro-based industry contributing to rural livelihoods and women empowerment. This study examines the socio-economic impact of sericulture on women in Mysuru and Mandya districts of Karnataka. A total of 80 women respondents (40 from each district) were surveyed using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that sericulture significantly enhances women's financial independence, decision-making power, and social status. However, challenges such as lack of training, financial constraints, and limited government support persist. The study suggests strengthening institutional support, improving access to training, and enhancing financial assistance to maximize the benefits of sericulture.

**Keywords:** Socio-economic, training, financial constraints and financial assistance

#### 1. Introduction

Women empowerment is a key factor in rural development, as it enhances economic growth, social equity, and overall community well-being. In India, sericulture plays a vital role in providing employment opportunities, especially for women, due to its labor-intensive nature (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019) [5]. The sector is particularly suitable for rural households as it requires relatively low investment and offers regular income throughout the year. Women actively participate in various stages of sericulture, including mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, and cocoon harvesting, making it an important source of livelihood. Karnataka is a leading state in silk production, and districts like Mysuru and Mandya are major contributors to the sericulture industry. The favorable climatic conditions, availability of mulberry resources, and strong institutional support have made these regions prominent in silk production. Sericulture offers opportunities for income generation, skill development, and social upliftment of rural women (Central Silk Board, 2021) [3]. In addition to economic benefits, sericulture contributes significantly to women's empowerment by enhancing their decision-making capacity within households and improving their social status in the community. It promotes financial independence and reduces dependency on male family members. Furthermore, sericulture supports inclusive growth by providing employment to marginalized and less-educated women, thereby reducing rural poverty and migration. The sector also has strong potential for sustainable development, as it is eco-friendly and integrates well with agricultural practices. However, despite its advantages, women engaged in sericulture face several challenges such as lack of technical training, inadequate access to credit, market fluctuations, and limited awareness

of government schemes. Addressing these issues is essential to fully realize the potential of sericulture as a tool for women empowerment.

#### 2. Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected from selected regions of Mysuru and Mandya districts in Karnataka. A total of 80 respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure unbiased representation of the study population. Data were collected through a well-structured questionnaire comprising both open-ended and close-ended questions designed to capture relevant socio-economic and study-specific information. A pilot survey was conducted prior to the main data collection to assess the clarity, consistency, and reliability of the instrument, and necessary revisions were incorporated. The data collection was carried out through personal interviews, enabling better interaction with respondents and improving the accuracy and completeness of responses. The collected data were subsequently coded, classified, and tabulated for systematic analysis. For analytical purposes, descriptive statistical tools such as percentages, frequency distributions, and mean values were employed to interpret the data and draw meaningful conclusions aligned with the research objectives. The scope of the study is limited to 80 respondents from Mysuru and Mandya districts, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the methodology adopted ensures a reasonable degree of validity and reliability. The methodological approach adopted in this study is consistent with established practices in rural livelihood research, as evidenced in studies conducted by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (2020) [9].

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 3.1:** Socio-economic Profile and Sericulture Participation of Respondents (n = 80)

| No. | Question                                                   | Participants n-80 (%) | Response Options          |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1   | Age                                                        | 18.75                 | 20–30                     |
|     |                                                            | 28.75                 | 31–40                     |
|     |                                                            | 37.50                 | 41–50                     |
|     |                                                            | 15                    | Above 50                  |
| 2   | Educational qualification                                  | 51.25                 | Illiterate                |
|     |                                                            | 35                    | Primary                   |
|     |                                                            | 10                    | Secondary                 |
|     |                                                            | 3.75                  | Higher education          |
| 3   | Marital status                                             | 86.25                 | Married                   |
|     |                                                            | 8.75                  | Unmarried                 |
|     |                                                            | 5                     | Widow                     |
| 4   | Family size                                                | 36.25                 | 2–4 members               |
|     |                                                            | 52.5                  | 5–7 members               |
|     |                                                            | 11.25                 | More than 7               |
| 5   | Do you own agricultural land?                              | 85                    | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 15                    | No                        |
| 6   | How long have you been involved in sericulture?            | 23.75                 | Less than 3 years         |
|     |                                                            | 35                    | 3–5 years                 |
|     |                                                            | 41.25                 | More than 5 years         |
| 7   | Which sericulture activities do you perform?               | 91.25                 | Mulberry cultivation      |
|     |                                                            | 23.75                 | Silkworm feeding          |
|     |                                                            | 33.75                 | Cleaning rearing beds     |
|     |                                                            | 95                    | Cocoon harvesting         |
| 8   | How many hours per day do you spend on sericulture work?   | 22.5                  | Less than 3 hours         |
|     |                                                            | 53.75                 | 3–6 hours                 |
|     |                                                            | 25                    | More than 6 hours         |
| 9   | Have you received training in sericulture practices?       | 12.5                  | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 87.5                  | No                        |
| 10  | Source of sericulture training                             | 12.5                  | Government department     |
|     |                                                            | 0                     | NGO                       |
|     |                                                            | 67.5                  | Self-learning             |
|     |                                                            | 20                    | No training               |
| 11  | Approximate annual income from sericulture                 | 10                    | Below ₹30,000             |
|     |                                                            | 48.75                 | ₹30,000–₹60,000           |
|     |                                                            | 28.75                 | ₹60,000–₹90,000           |
|     |                                                            | 12.5                  | Above ₹90,000             |
| 12  | Does sericulture contribute to your household income?      | 100                   | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 0                     | No                        |
| 13  | How do you use income from sericulture?                    | 62.5                  | Household expenses        |
|     |                                                            | 22.5                  | Children's education      |
|     |                                                            | 0                     | Savings                   |
|     |                                                            | 15                    | Agriculture investment    |
| 14  | Has sericulture improved your financial independence?      | 91.25                 | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 8.75                  | No                        |
| 15  | Do you participate in household decision-making?           | 72.5                  | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 27.5                  | No                        |
| 16  | Has your social status improved after joining sericulture? | 83.75                 | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 16.25                 | No                        |
| 17  | Are you a member of a Self-Help Group (SHG)?               | 15                    | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 85                    | No                        |
| 18  | What problems do you face in sericulture?                  | 28.75                 | Lack of training          |
|     |                                                            | 30                    | Disease in silkworms      |
|     |                                                            | 8.75                  | Low market price          |
|     |                                                            | 32.5                  | Lack of financial support |
| 19  | Do you receive support from government schemes?            | 22.5                  | Yes                       |
|     |                                                            | 77.5                  | No                        |
| 20  | What improvements are needed for sericulture development?  | 26.25                 | More training programs    |
|     |                                                            | 15                    | Better market facilities  |
|     |                                                            | 47.5                  | Financial support         |
|     |                                                            | 11.25                 | Improved technology       |

### 3.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

The majority of respondents (37.5%) belong to the age group of 41–50 years. More than half (51.25%) are illiterate, indicating low educational attainment among rural women, which aligns with findings from rural development studies (National Sample Survey Office, 2018) <sup>[9]</sup>. A large majority (86.25%) are married, and most households consist of 5–7 members.

### 3.2 Economic Characteristics

About 85% of respondents own agricultural land, supporting sericulture practices. A significant proportion (41.25%) have more than five years of experience. Women are actively involved in mulberry cultivation and cocoon harvesting, which are key stages in silk production (Central Silk Board, 2022) <sup>[3]</sup>. Most respondents spend 3–6 hours daily on sericulture work, indicating its role as a supplementary occupation.

### 3.3 Training and Skill Development

Only 12.5% of respondents have received formal training, while most rely on self-learning. Lack of training is a major constraint in sericulture development, as highlighted in earlier studies (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### 3.4 Income and Financial Contribution

Nearly half of the respondents earn between ₹30,000 and ₹60,000 annually. Sericulture contributes to household income for all respondents, confirming its importance as a livelihood source (NABARD, 2020). Income is mainly used for household expenses and children's education, with no savings reported. This reflects limited financial security among rural households.

### 3.5 Women Empowerment Indicators

A majority of respondents reported improved financial independence (91.25%), participation in decision-making (72.5%), and improved social status (83.75%). These findings are consistent with empowerment theories that link income generation to increased autonomy (Rural Development Studies). However, only 15% are members of Self-Help Groups, indicating low institutional engagement.

### 3.6 Challenges Faced

Key challenges include lack of financial support, lack of training, and silkworm diseases. Similar constraints have been identified in sericulture sector reports (Central Silk Board, 2021) <sup>[3]</sup>.

A large proportion (77.5%) reported not receiving government support, indicating implementation gaps in welfare schemes.

### 3.7 Suggestions for Improvement

Respondents emphasized the need for:

- Financial support
- Training programs
- Market facilities
- Improved technology

These suggestions align with policy recommendations for strengthening rural livelihoods (Food and Agriculture

Organization, 2019) <sup>[5]</sup>.

## 4. Conclusion

Sericulture has emerged as a powerful instrument for promoting women empowerment in rural areas of Mysuru and Mandya districts. The study clearly indicates that participation in sericulture enhances women's income, strengthens their financial independence, and improves their role in household decision-making. It also contributes to social upliftment by increasing their confidence, status, and participation in community activities. Thus, sericulture not only supports livelihood generation but also acts as a catalyst for gender empowerment and rural development. Despite these positive outcomes, the study identifies critical challenges such as lack of access to formal training, limited financial support, low awareness of government schemes, and weak institutional linkages. The minimal participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) further restricts collective empowerment and access to credit facilities. In addition, issues like silkworm diseases and market price fluctuations continue to affect income stability. From a policy perspective, there is an urgent need to strengthen capacity-building initiatives by organizing regular, need-based training programs tailored for rural women. Government agencies should enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of financial assistance schemes, subsidies, and credit support. Promoting SHG formation and strengthening existing groups can improve financial inclusion and collective bargaining power. Furthermore, improving market infrastructure, ensuring fair pricing mechanisms, and introducing modern technologies can significantly boost productivity and profitability. Awareness campaigns and extension services must be expanded to educate women about available government programs and best practices in sericulture. Collaboration between government departments, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations can further strengthen the support system.

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