



## Socio-economic conditions of women in tailoring units in Udupi Taluk, Karnataka

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### Abstract

Women's participation in tailoring units represents a significant component of skill-based rural livelihood diversification in Udupi Taluk of Udupi district. For women from lower- and middle-class households in particular, tailoring offers flexible, home-based work alternatives. The socioeconomic circumstances, institutional support networks, income trends, and limitations experienced by women involved in tailoring activities are all examined in this study, which is solely based on secondary data. Based on government records, papers from skill development programs, and literature on women's entrepreneurship, the study concludes that tailoring increases economic agency and helps diversify household income. Sustainable expansion is, however, constrained by structural issues, such as restricted market access, capital limitations, and seasonal income fluctuations. In order to support women's entrepreneurship ecosystems in coastal Karnataka, the article makes the case for comprehensive policy interventions.

**Keywords:** Women's empowerment, tailoring units, rural livelihoods, self-help groups, skill development

### Introduction

In India, rural women are becoming more and more involved in the economy through skill-based microbusinesses. Because it can be produced at home and requires little capital, tailoring has become a sustainable source of income in coastal Karnataka. Strong Self-Help Group (SHG) networks and high literacy rates in Udupi Taluk foster favorable conditions for these kinds of activity. Recent government and non-government initiatives have repositioned tailoring as a structured income-generating occupation, despite the fact that it has historically been seen as a home skill. Using secondary sources, this study methodically investigates the socioeconomic circumstances of women employed in tailoring facilities.

#### Objectives

- To investigate the socioeconomic status of women working in Udupi Taluk's tailoring units.
- To examine how institutional support and skill development contribute to the growth of tailoring as a means of subsistence.
- To evaluate employment stability, working conditions, and income trends.
- To recommend legislative actions to support women-owned tailoring businesses.

#### Study area

Udupi Taluk situated in the coastal region of Karnataka along the Arabian Sea in southwestern India, is an administrative division within Udupi district. The taluk is a combination of emerging service industries, agriculture, education, tourism, religion, and urban and rural socioeconomic dynamics. Udupi Taluk is roughly 924.13 square kilometers in size and has an average elevation of about 39 meters above sea level. The tropical monsoon climate of the area is marked by intense rainfall from June to October (coastal Karnataka receives about 3,000–4,000 mm of rain yearly). About 562,799 people live in Udupi Taluk, with 46.3% of them living in cities and 53.7% in rural regions.

Tulu and Kannada are commonly spoken languages. Udupi Taluk and the larger district are a part of Tulu Nadu, a historic cultural region renowned for its unique food, rich cultural legacy, and temple customs, particularly at the Udupi Sri Krishna Temple. In rural areas, agriculture continues to be a key source of income. The primary crops grown there include paddy, coconut, cashew, lentils, mango, and vegetables. Inland and marine fishing are supported by coastal and riverine ecosystems, particularly in coastal settlements. Udupi is regarded as a center for banking, the birthplace or initial location of organizations such as Corporation Bank and Syndicate Bank, among others. Regional and national students and professionals are drawn to the education and healthcare sectors, particularly in neighboring Manipal. Temple festivals and pilgrimages are the main focus of religious tourism, which draws tourists who support local business and hospitality services. State highways and NH-66 connect the taluk to interior and coastal Karnataka. Mobility of people and products is facilitated by the closeness to Mangaluru Airport and rail lines.

#### Review of Literature

Training in vocational skills increases women's socioeconomic engagement, according to a large body of data. According to Bala *et al.* (2018) [2], skill interventions that concentrate on handicrafts, tailoring, and related trades can increase employment prospects and boost women's confidence and financial independence. Increased involvement in communal decision-making and stronger bargaining power within households are associated with vocational training.

In rural development literature, tailoring is largely acknowledged as a flexible, low-investment livelihood alternative that is especially well-suited for women. Research from national skill programs indicates that customizing skill training improves employability and fosters the growth of microbusinesses. However, studies also show that restricted access to capital and formal markets, demand seasonality, and market competition

frequently limit earnings from such employment (Parihar, 2023; Indian Council of Agricultural Research, 2021) <sup>[12, 19]</sup>. Research on Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in South India shows that they serve as venues for peer learning, savings, credit access, and enterprise development. Women's collective agency, financial inclusion, and better economic outcomes have all been favorably linked to SHG membership (Innovation and Entrepreneurship Journal, 2024) <sup>[13]</sup>. SHGs in Karnataka support group marketing initiatives, revolving money, and customization training. Research on gender and labor draws attention to structural issues that women in the unorganized sector face, such as a lack of social security, restricted access to capital, competition from ready-made markets, and time poverty brought on by juggling income and household work (Desai & Kulkarni, 2019) <sup>[6]</sup>. For an understanding of women's tailoring livelihoods, these limitations provide a crucial conceptual framework.

### **Analysis**

In Karnataka, tailoring instruction is funded by both government programs and non-governmental organizations. The state has organized free or subsidized tailoring training camps for unemployed women to teach them the fundamentals of stitching. These sessions typically run one to three months. In Udupi Taluk, women who work in tailoring units typically come from lower- and middle-class rural homes, families where male migration necessitates additional income, and networks of SHGs and members of community organizations. Having access to formal training boosts women's self-esteem and equips them for jobs that provide revenue. Udupi offers independent tailoring and fashion training programs in addition to government incentives, indicating a local need for skill development. In order to support self-employment, state-level interventions also provide free sewing machines to rural women who satisfy certain qualifying requirements, such as age, place of residence, and income limits.

### **Taking Part in Economic Networks and Self-Help Groups**

In the Udupi district, women's self-help groups (SHGs) have grown dramatically in the last several years, with thousands of members engaging in small business enterprises, tailoring, and catering. Women members of SHGs benefit from group activity and savings, which promote social cohesiveness and economic agency. Women who participate in SHG networks frequently gain from group training sessions and connections to financial facilities, which allow them to start tailoring businesses or use group marketing channels to fulfill local orders.

### **Tailoring as a Source of Income**

In Udupi, tailoring activities include creating custom women's clothing, producing auxiliary textile goods (such as bags and crafts), and stitching at home for local customers. Because tailoring work is usually flexible and can be done in addition to family chores, it is appealing to women who are juggling income and household responsibilities. Income from tailoring varies based on market demand, skill level, and access to orders. Demand for specialized tailoring services rises at seasonal peaks, such as wedding and festival seasons.

Women entering tailoring typically possess basic literacy and have completed short-term tailoring training offered by government or community organizations.

### **Institutional Support and Skill Development**

In Karnataka, government and non-governmental programs offer rural women free or heavily discounted tailoring instruction. Basic technological abilities, cutting and stitching procedures, and occasionally guidance on enterprise start-ups are all included in initiatives. SHGs, rural skill centers, and occasionally private training facilities provide tailoring instruction. Additionally, state-level initiatives to encourage self-employment include sewing machine distribution programs for qualified women. These programs are a part of the support system for women in Udupi Taluk, even though their uptake cannot be accurately measured from secondary sources.

### **Income Trends and Economic Contribution**

The production of basic clothing and textile goods for local marketplaces, home-based custom tailoring orders, and seasonal demand growth during festivals, weddings, and school enrollment are all ways that women in the tailoring industry boost household income. The amount of money earned is typically supplemental and extremely unpredictable, contingent on demand cycles, clientele, and skill level. Pricing power and profits are constrained by competition from inexpensive ready-made clothing.

### **Conditions of Work and the Dual Labor Burden**

Tailoring jobs and domestic duties are frequently balanced by women. Flexibility is possible with home-based employment arrangements, however during periods of high client demand and domestic responsibilities, job intensity rises. Secondary reports suggest that time pressures and limited childcare support constrain business growth.

### **Institutional Connections: Credit Access and SHGs**

For female tailors in the Udupi district, SHGs offer crucial social and economic connections. They make it easier for people to save money, learn together, and get microcredit. Although there is still no official market facilitation, women's involvement in SHGs is associated with increased enterprise confidence and less financial risk.

### **Limitations**

Secondary data reveals a number of limitations,

- Limited access to markets outside of local communities.
- The lack of funds to buy sophisticated sewing tools
- The threat of mass-produced clothing
- Variations in demand by season.
- Time poverty brought on by household responsibilities.

### **Recommendations**

To strengthen tailoring as a sustainable livelihood pathway, the following policy measures are suggested:

- Create regional and local platforms to link female tailors with larger consumer markets, such as online marketplaces.
- Provide microcredit solutions designed for the expansion of small businesses and the acquisition of equipment.

- Provide business-oriented instruction on pricing, costing, and client interaction to supplement technical tailoring skills.
- Encourage the formation of tailoring clusters (possibly through SHG federations) to share infrastructure and access bulk orders.
- Extend social security schemes (e.g., health, pension) to women in informal skill-based occupations.

### Conclusion

This study uses secondary data to show that women in Udupi Taluk's tailoring facilities participate in a significant but structurally limited livelihood activity. While SHG involvement and training programs increase economic participation, long-term sustainability necessitates better market access, finance support, and coordinated policy attention. Tailoring may be strengthened as a resilient and empowering livelihood alternative for rural women in coastal Karnataka by addressing these limitations through focused interventions.

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