



# Agripreneur Characteristics and Social Capital Synergies for Sustainable Livelihood

Justina Teronpi<sup>1\*</sup>, Juthika Konwar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dept. of Business Administration, Assam University, Silchar, India  
[teronpijustina@gmail.com](mailto:teronpijustina@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Dept. of Business Administration, Assam University, Silchar, India  
[juthikakonwar@gmail.com](mailto:juthikakonwar@gmail.com)

**Abstract**—In the context of sustainability and agriculture, the relationship between social capital and agri-entrepreneurship has emerged as an important area of study. Since social capital is an integral part of achieving sustainable livelihood, its importance cannot be overlooked. Therefore, this study based in the district of Karbi Anglong, Assam, focuses on the social capital levels of women agri-entrepreneurs as well as understanding the levels of sustainable livelihood of the respondents. The study is based on findings from primary data, which include certain agri-entrepreneurship characteristics such as age of the respondents, level of education accomplished, exposure to agricultural training and entrepreneurship development, farm age and farm experience were associated with social capital dimensions and sustainable livelihood dimensions using a quantitative approach. The analysis shows the importance of certain characteristics that are crucial for achieving sustainable livelihood. The study also highlights the importance of developmental programs and promotion of group efforts in order to make agricultural communities resilient, preparing them for several shocks and stresses in the future.

**Keywords**—women, agripreneurship, social capital, agribusiness, sustainable livelihood

## 1. Introduction

The sustainable livelihoods framework offers a useful conceptual background for understanding how agripreneurship helps improve well-being. The SLA emphasizes that households draw on multiple “capitals” or resources—human, natural, physical, financial, and social—to develop certain strategies for livelihood, and that access to and the interplay among these capitals determine the sustainability of outcomes over time (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). These frameworks are the foundation for livelihood research because they explain the mechanisms through which these assets, institutions, and strategies interact to shape livelihood outcomes (DFID, 1999). Ashley & Carney (1999) describe sustainable livelihood as a way of understanding about the purview and goals for development that are used to accelerate advancement and reduce poverty by examining poverty and its root causes; providing broad perspectives on opportunities for developmental activities and their similar impact and fit with livelihood priorities; and so on. The essential elements are as follows: people-centered; the various methods people use to achieve their goals; the organizations, structures, goals, and policies that control their access to resources, opportunities, and the results they can produce; and their immediate surroundings, which include external trends, shocks, and seasonality. Sustainable livelihood is also defined as a strategy that allows for the establishment of certain modes of action that are only motivated by the interests of the individuals involved. However, it is not a solution to altogether remove poverty; rather, it brings attention to the possibility that individuals may have, with respect to their capabilities, social capital or networks, a means of approach to monetary resources, and control over institutions (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Krantz, 2001; Serrat, 2017).

## 2. Women Agripreneurship and Sustainable Livelihoods

Agriculture continues to be the primary livelihood source for much of the rural poor worldwide. However, subsistence farming alone is increasingly inadequate for sustaining households amid climate change, market volatility, and population pressures (FAO, 2017). Agripreneurship or agri-entrepreneurship, which is the combination of business, innovation and entrepreneurial activity in agriculture, has developed as a viable option to boost income, diversification, and seen as an alternative to resilience. By enabling farmers to adopt business models, process and market their products, and add value along supply chains, agripreneurship can contribute significantly to rural transformation. Women agripreneurship is the activity by which women nurture their agribusinesses via various actions and ideas in the agriculture and related

sectors. Agripreneurship refers to establishing new ventures for the purpose of generating profit while fully assessing the risks connected with it, and in this sense, agripreneurs are individuals in the agricultural and related areas that operate their ventures (Yoganandan et al. 2022). Many rural communities aspire to a sustainable livelihood, which means having access to livelihood capitals and income that meets their daily necessities and requirements, such as clean water, food, excellent health care, and community engagement. It also refers to having food security, clothing, quality education, decent health care, social inclusion, and job prospects. Women are regarded as the most important part or element in supporting sustainable livelihoods, and participation in entrepreneurship will promote long-term socioeconomic development as well as have a favorable influence on women agripreneurs' capital resources or assets. A study conducted in Uttar Pradesh by Singh & Nain (2016) on farm women in Hapur district found out that the participants of the entrepreneurship action study could start agricultural businesses by producing value-added goods and processing food. Women who had benefited from undertaking projects showed a noticeable transformation, such as a perceived increase in income at the household level and minimizing post-harvest losses, which was made possible by the synergistic efforts of multiple agencies at work.

The sustainable livelihood framework, therefore, delivers a useful context for evaluating these outcomes. It postulates that households rely on a range of livelihood capitals—human, natural, physical, financial, and social—to develop livelihood strategies, and that outcomes depend on the interplay among these capitals (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). Policies that strengthen agripreneur capacities are therefore likely to translate into sustainable livelihood improvements only when complemented by supporting resources and institutions (DFID, 1999).

### **3. Role Of Social Capital In Livelihood Sustainability**

Among the five livelihood capitals, social capital has gained particular attention in rural development research. Social capital denotes the networks, customs, and trust that enable collaboration, shared accomplishment, and information sharing. Social capital is described as social resources such as group membership, cooperatives, trust, and connections that may be used to earn a living. The idea of social capital denotes people's trust in one another and the community as a whole. It also indicates the interpersonal relationships within a clearly defined social group with a common goal. In an agrarian society, social capital reduces transaction costs, enhances access to credit and markets, supports collective sharing of resources and knowledge, and provides informal support against shocks. A study by Mahato & Jha (2023b) revealed that social capital is responsible for long-term livelihood attainment, particularly in rural settings. It was found to encourage network and connection transactions among its members, which helped to boost businesses, self-employment, and improve women's living conditions.

Social capital is also found to positively correlated with growth in income and more diversification of livelihood, according to several empirical studies. However, the impact is also dependent on the different types of social capital that is accessed by the individual; such as relationships, linkages or connection with certain groups. This implies that while agripreneurship characteristics are important, the supporting environment that social capital fosters may be just as important for achieving livelihood success.

### **4. Women Agripreneurship And Sustainable Livelihoods**

Agricultural entrepreneurship becoming more widely recognised as major force behind rural development. However, it is found that many research gaps remain in the research on social capital and agri-entrepreneurship. First, there aren't enough studies on how livelihood capitals interact or link with certain agripreneurship characteristics like age, education level, farm experience, and market experience that are able to influence and shape livelihood outcomes. Existing research often treats agripreneurs as a homogenous group, overlooking heterogeneity in personal traits and their influence on success. Second, few studies have examined its relationship with sustainable livelihood, which not only includes income but also social security, food security, environmental security, etc. Furthermore, research in this study area is often generalized on the national or international level, which limits the attention to local contexts such as tribal or rural communities, where the major part of their livelihood is dependent on some form of agriculture. Particularly, there is little empirical evidence on how agripreneur characteristics shape the sustainability of livelihoods in hilly regions, like the district of Karbi Anglong in Assam. This lack of context-specific research creates a gap in understanding the mechanisms through which agripreneurship contributes to long-term livelihood security. Therefore, based on the assumptions of the theoretical framework and evidence from previous studies, the following hypotheses are outlined:

*Hypothesis 1:* There is no difference in livelihood security among women agripreneurs based on their agripreneur characteristics (sub-hypotheses include no differences in livelihood security among women agripreneurs of different age groups, educational levels, training received, farm age, and farm experience).

*Hypothesis 2:* There is no correlation between social capital and livelihood security among women agripreneurs.

## 5. Regional Relevance And Study Objectives

This study is conducted in the state of Assam, where agriculture remains a large part of the society and where there is an urgent need for understanding its role in attaining sustainable livelihood. Therefore, this study investigates the relationships between (a) agripreneur characteristics and sustainable livelihood, and (b) elements of social capital and sustainable livelihood of the women agri-entrepreneurs. Specifically, the study seeks to first, analyze the levels of sustainable livelihood of the women agripreneurs. Second, it examines the association between agripreneur characteristics and sustainable livelihood and third, the study examines the association between social capital and sustainable livelihood of the women agripreneurs in the study area. This study helps to add to the existing pool of literature by bridging entrepreneurship research with livelihood theory and offering empirical insights into how agripreneurship and social capital jointly shape rural development pathways.

## 6. Methods And Materials

### A. Research design

This study was conducted using a descriptive-correlational research design.

### B. Study area and population of the study

The study was undertaken in the district of Karbi Anglong in Assam. It is the largest district in Assam, with the majority of the women taking part in the agricultural workforce. The data for this study was collected from 105 women agri-entrepreneurs from 3 blocks in the study area which are: Howraghat, Samelangso, and Langsomepi. Purposive or judgmental sampling method was utilized to collect data from the required areas.

### C. Research tools

A schedule was prepared for the data collection process which included agripreneurship characteristics of the women entrepreneurs, the dimensions of the social capital, and livelihood security.

#### *Tool I: Social Capital*

A 5-point Likert scale was used with 1 being 'poor; and 5 being 'excellent' to evaluate the dimensions of social capital of the respondents. For measuring the sustainable livelihood levels of the respondents in the study area, 25-item tool using the 'Sustainable livelihood framework' was adapted from Swetha and Shivalingaiah (2019) for understanding the sustainable livelihood levels. The Likert scale ranged from 1 denoting 'Very least extent' to 5 denoting 'Very greater extent'. The constructs for measuring the different levels are listed in the table below" The items for measuring 'Social Capital' are listed in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1. SOCIAL CAPITAL

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Items</i>
<b>Social Capital</b>	Relationship with relatives and friends
	Participation in social-political organisation
	Influence of political power in the village
	Network with agricultural departments
	Connecting for farm work
	Connecting with financial institutions
	Networking with transporters
	Networking with shop owners and input dealers
	Contact with other entrepreneurs
	Taking leadership roles in NGO/ other institution meetings

	Network with farmer groups
	Network with NGOs and other institutions (Dept. of Agriculture, for example.)

(Compiled by the authors)

*Tool II: Sustainable Livelihood Security*

The items for measuring ‘Sustainable Livelihood Security’ are listed in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD SECURITY

Construct	Items	Total items
Livelihood Security	Ecological security (5items)	25
	Economic security (11items)	
	Social security (4items)	
	Food and Nutritiona 1 security (5items)	

(Compiled by the authors)

*D. Reliability analysis*

The reliability study was carried out using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, which assesses the internal consistency of the instruments administered in the study. The analysis was performed on the responses of 105 respondents from the 3 blocks in the district of Karbi Anglong viz. Howraghat, Samelangso, and Langsomepi, from the period of November 2024 to February 2025. The overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scales for social capital and sustainable livelihood was 0.862 and 0.869, respectively, indicating strong internal consistency.

*E. Test of normality*

In order to examine whether the data followed a normally distributed pattern, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test was applied. The results showed that the data did not significantly stray from normality ( $D = 0.075, p = 0.180 > 0.05$  for Social Capital) and ( $D = 0.060, p = 0.200 > 0.05$  for Sustainable Livelihood). Since the significance value was greater than the threshold level of 0.05, the null hypothesis of normal distribution could not be rejected. Therefore, the data were considered to be normally distributed, indicating further use of parametric tests.

*F. Statistical analysis*

SPSS version 25.0 was used for analyzing the data collected. Every data entry was verified for any sort of errors. Percentage was used to describe categorical variables. To ascertain the relationship between the variables being examined, the study used inferential statistics. Pearson’s correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was employed to assess the degree of association among the research variables. A significant correlation is seen when  $r$  is more than 0.5, whereas, a perfect correlation is observed when the value of  $r$  is at 1. Moderate correlation lies when the value of  $r$  lies between 0.5 to 0.3; when the value of  $r$  is less than 0.3, there is a weak correlation. When  $r$  equals to 0, it indicates there is no association. The statistical significance level was determined at  $p < 0.05$ . additionally, a one-way ANOVA was also conducted to examine the significant differences in livelihood security levels across the selected agripreneurship characteristics. All the analyses were conducted at both the 5 % ( $p < 0.05$ ) and 1 % ( $p < 0.01$ ) probability levels, and the tow-tailed test criteria of  $p < 0.05$  was used for significance. To illustrate the selected characteristics of the women agripreneurs, a frequency was also carried out.

**7. Results**

An analysis of descriptive statistics using frequency was conducted to illustrate the selected characteristics of the respondents.

### A. Age group

As shown in Table 3, the highest percentage of the respondents that is, 31.4% were in the age group of 36-40 years; succeeded by those between the age group of 31-35 years at 20% and between the age group of 41-45 years at 15.2%. Also from the table, it is observed that only 3.8% are from the younger age category of 20-25 years. In general, the age group distribution shows that the majority of the responders are between the ages of 31 and 45 range; which represents the most productive and working years, which may impact their participation in entrepreneurship and sustainability of livelihood.

TABLE 3. AGRIPRENEURSHIP CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS (N = 105)

Age group of the respondents (in years)	Percentage (%)
20-25	3.8
26-30	9.5
31-35	20.0
36-40	31.4
41-45	15.2
46-50	10.5
51-55	7.6
56-60	1.9
Total	100
<b>Educational status of the respondents</b>	
Illiterate	8.6
Primary school	12.4
Secondary school	47.6
Higher secondary	19.0
Undergraduate	1.9
Graduate	9.5
Postgraduate	1.0
Total	100 (%)
<b>Training received</b>	
Yes	45.7
No	54.3
Total	100 (%)
<b>Farm age of the respondents (in years)</b>	
None	4.8
1-10	5.7
11-20	10.5
21-30	5.7
31-40	1.0
Ancestral	70.5
Others	1.9
None	4.8
Total	100 (%)
<b>Farm experience of the respondents (in years)</b>	
1-5	11.4
6-10	29.5
11-15	15.2

16-20	23.8
21-25	7.6
26-30	4.8
More than 30 years	7.6
Total	100 (%)

(Compiled by the authors)

### B. *Educational status*

In Table 3, it is observed that nearly half of the respondents had completed secondary school at 47.6%; which makes it the major level of education for the respondents. A significant percentage of 19% also completed higher secondary schooling, while only 12.4% had completed primary education. Extremely very few respondents were undergraduates (1%) or postgraduates (1%). It is also important to note that about 8.6% of the respondents were illiterate; meaning they could not read or write. In general, the results show that the majority of the respondents have completed basic education, while there were limited percentage of respondents that had completed higher education.

### C. *Training received*

In Table 3, it is observed that while 45.7% of the respondents said that they have received training, a major percentage of the respondents (54.3%) said they had not received training in any form. This indicates that even there are opportunities for receiving training, more than half of the respondents have not participated in any formal training programmes aimed at skill development and increasing the technical knowledge of the respondents. This huge gap may have an impact on their ability to grow their skills and hone their entrepreneurial capacity.

### D. *Farm age*

As observed from Table 3, the majority of the respondents that is 70.5%, said that their farms were ancestral; which highlights the significance of inheritance and traditional landholding laws in the study area. About 1% of the respondents said that their farm age was in the range of 31-40 years, while 10.5% said their farm age in the range of 11-20 years, 5.7% said their farm age was in the range of 1-10 years; another 5.7% said their farm age was in the range of 21-30 years and another 6.7% of the respondents said their farm age was undetermined. These results imply that the majority of the respondents are dependent on ancestral farm land, meaning they were inherited which may provide stability and security but could present challenges with modernization.

### E. *Farm experience*

From Table 3, it is observed that the majority of the respondents (29.5%) had farm experience of 6-10 years, while 23.8% had 16-20 years of experience. About 15.2% had 11-15 years of farm experience. A smaller percentage that is 11.4% had just 1-5 years of farm experience. Notably, about 7.6% of the respondents had farm experience of over 30 years. Overall, the results show that the majority of the respondents had moderate agriculture experience with 6-20 years.

### F. *Levels of livelihood security*

A composite score for the 25 items was determined based on the items. The lowest score was 25, while the highest was at 125. The positive statements in the livelihood security construct were weighted at 5,4,3,2,1, while the negative statements were scored in reversed. The livelihood security score was computed by adding all the respondents' statements for the 25 items. A greater degree of livelihood security is indicated by a higher score on the statements. Based on the mean scores, the livelihood security of the farmers was then categorized into, low, medium, and high.

TABLE 4. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD SECURITY LEVELS

Levels of Sustainable Livelihood	Percentage
High	47.6
Medium	52.4
Total	100

(Compiled by the authors)

From Table 4, 47.6% of the respondents had high livelihood security, while more than half of the respondents at 52.4% had medium level of livelihood security. This suggests that despite nearly half of the respondents having high livelihood security, more than half of the respondents fall under the medium livelihood security category. Importantly, none of the respondents were categorized under the low livelihood security category. This may suggest that the majority of the women agripreneurs are at least somewhat capable of sustaining their livelihoods.

*G. Difference in livelihood security among the women agripreneurs based on their characteristics*

In Table 5, the one-way ANOVA indicates that training exposure ( $p=0.002$ ), farm age ( $p=0.004$ ), and farm experience ( $p=0.042$ ) had statistically significant effects on livelihood sustainability, resulting in the rejection of the null hypotheses for these variables. In contrast, age of the respondents ( $p=0.448$ ) and education level ( $p=0.073$ ) did not show significant effects, and the null hypotheses were accepted. These results imply that the characteristics of agripreneurship related to experience and exposure play a more important role in influencing livelihood outcomes rather than demographic aspects such as age and education.

TABLE 5. ONE-WAY ANOVA FOR AGRIPRENEUR CHARACTERISTICS

Agripreneur characteristics	Sig. (2-tailed)	Null hypothesis
Characteristic 1: Age	0.448	Accepted
Characteristic 1: Education	0.073	Accepted
Characteristic 1: Training exposure	0.002	Rejected
Characteristic 1: Farm age	0.004	Rejected
Characteristic 1: Farm experience	.042	Rejected
(Analysis using one-way ANOVA)		

(Compiled by the authors)

*H. Relationship between social capital and sustainable livelihood security*

As shown in Table 6, a moderate positive correlation was found between social capital and sustainable livelihood using the Pearson's Correlation analysis ( $r=0.452$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This shows that higher levels of social capital are significantly related with greater livelihood security among the women agripreneurs in the study area.

TABLE 6. PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD SECURITY

Correlation between social capital and livelihood security			
Variables	Pearson's correlation (r)	P-value	N
Social capital, sustainable livelihood security	0.452	.000	105
*Correlation is found to be significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

(Compiled by the authors)

## 8. Discussions

The objectives of the present study were to examine the demographic characteristics of the agripreneurs, the relationship of agripreneurial factors on livelihood outcomes, and the association between social capital and sustainable livelihood dimensions among the respondents in Karbi Anglong district. The results offer crucial insights into how demographic characteristics, agripreneurship features shape the outcomes of livelihood.

### A. *Socio-demographic profile of respondents*

From the age distribution pattern, the majority of the respondents were in their peak working years, mainly within the age group of 31–45 years. This indicates that agribusinesses are mostly driven by those who are in an active age in life. The mean age, that is 36–40 years also imply a young age group where women are more active and are capable of taking risks in their business activities (Kabir et al., 2012). Educational levels of the respondents showed that nearly half; that is 47.6% of the respondents had already completed secondary school, indicating that although the respondents had completed basic schooling, yet higher education is quite limited. This further might impact how information is accessed by the respondents in the study area.

It is also found that more than half of the respondents that is 54% had no formal training exposure such as getting certifications or getting trained by regulated government bodies. Since capacity and skill is developed by training, this staggering percentage points out the major lapses relating to adequate training programs targeted towards development and building women-agri-entrepreneurs. Training programs are also important for continuous improvement, ultimately leading to exceptional development (Kademani et al., 2024). Another important characteristic was farm experience, where the findings from the study revealed that the majority of the respondents had about 6–10 years of farm experience, indicating a moderate farm experience of the respondents. The level of farm experience is also crucial in undertaking certain agricultural practices on their own based on their knowledge and thereby, teaching others about the technical know-how in the interaction process (Kabir et al., 2012).

### B. *Association between agripreneur characteristics and sustainable livelihood security*

From the one-way ANOVA analysis, it is found that significant association was observed between the agripreneurship characteristics and sustainable livelihood security. Characteristics such as training exposure, farm age, and farm experience were found to be associated significantly with sustainable livelihood levels. While age and educational level were found not significant. As discussed above, exposure to training, farm experience and farm age are important variables for capacity building and skill development, therefore, leading to sustainable livelihood in the long run.

### C. *Association between social capital and livelihood security*

A positive association was found between the dimensions of social capital and sustainable livelihood security ( $r = 0.452$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Social capital is an important resource for having a resilient livelihood. It helps to have more access to information, trust, and community participation. Besides these, higher social capital also means having friendships outside the family, solving conflicts together, and helping one another in times of need; therefore, helping each other overcome interpersonal problems (Kabir et al., 2012). Therefore, social capital is an intangible capital asset that helps achieve sustainable livelihood.

## 9. Implications of The Findings

The findings of the study shows that agripreneurship characteristics are important variables for determining livelihood sustainability. For example, with current scenario of developmental and capacity programs, both the State and Central governments can prioritize building women agripreneurs. The focus can be on practical-based approach so that they can apply in the long run. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are still required to check the progress of the women agripreneurs. Extension services, technical advisory, and inclusion of more women in cooperatives, and farmers' networks can help women entrepreneurs achieve sustainability in the long run.

## 10. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the study indicates that agripreneurship in the study area is shaped by a combination of demographic characteristics, agripreneurship characteristics, and social capital. While demographic factors like age and education alone do not guarantee livelihood security; farm experience, farm age, exposure to training, and social capital emerge as the important factors. Thus, the study adds to the expanding body of literature that places agripreneurship not only as an economic activity but also as a

socially embedded process that draws upon both tangible and intangible resources for achieving livelihood sustainability.

## 11. Further Research Directions

The study was conducted in a single district, that is Karbi Anglong in Assam, India. This may limit the findings applications to other regions with different agricultural and socio-economic features. It is therefore, suggested that such studies be conducted in other areas for drawing meaningful insights.

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