

Revisiting Women Entrepreneurship in India: Status and Research Trends

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7515136>

ABSTRACT

Though just a small percentage of women in India's formal economy engage in entrepreneurship, more and more Indian women have joined the industry in the previous two decades. Their businesses' establishment and expansion meant something to the Indian economy and culture. These businesswomen are making strides in a wide range of fields. The barriers to their achievement have been reduced but not eliminated. Many researchers have discussed this emerging topic from various angles. This paper attempts to revisit the status of Indian women entrepreneurs, mainly focusing on what changes have occurred in the past two decades and evaluating the research trends in this study area. The paper followed a theoretical analysis by locating publications by browsing the databases like EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar using different concept-related keywords and combining them with each other, and finally evaluating the best periodicals covering the larger field of entrepreneurship. The study showed that country performs poorly on entrepreneurial metrics even though 45 per cent of present businesses in India are led by women and, in the forthcoming five years, will expand by 90 per cent. The study also found a sufficient lack of diverse context-based research on female entrepreneurs in the Indian subcontinent compared to overseas; most research covered women entrepreneurship, its barriers and opportunities. Finally, the paper provides a set of implications that would motivate researchers to originate the research gap and produce more fruitful research findings.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Women Entrepreneurship, India, Status, Research Trends

A. Introduction

An enterprising mindset among a country's natives drives and contributes heavily to the development of that nation's economy. There can be no discrimination against either males or women in this initiative. India's government has made several steps to encourage more women to start their own businesses and become active participants in the country's economic development. The root word "Entrepreneurship" comes from the French term "Entreprenre," initially intended to denote an organiser of diverse musical or entertainment options. Gradually, "entrepreneurship" is used to describe a set of skills and traits that come together to form a business. A company's primary goal is to expand, so it constantly looks for new ways to do things and challenges its

employees to think outside the box. Investopedia (2022) states, “An entrepreneur is an individual who creates a new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards. The process of setting up a business is known as entrepreneurship. The entrepreneur is commonly seen as an innovator, a source of new ideas, goods, services, and business/or procedures.” According to Stevenson, entrepreneurship is the “pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled.” Women’s entrepreneurship refers to women taking charge of their financial futures by starting and running businesses. This practice improves women’s access to economic resources and boosts their social standing. That’s why women company owners, who account for almost 25% of all businesses, have had such a profound effect across the board.

In India, women make up fewer than 5% of the workforce, and much less than that make up the official economy (Deshpandey and Sethi, 2009). Cabrera and Mauricio (2017) argue that the lack of women’s participation in entrepreneurial activities would unevenly impact the nation's economic growth because women make up roughly half of the population and the world of business is not exclusive to either sex. Women have emerged as prominent businesswomen in today’s period of globalisation and democratisation, making major contributions to the growth process on a global scale. Therefore, it would be a mistake for policymakers in any economy to ignore the significant value women entrepreneurs bring to the table. Instead, women’s economic empowerment is prioritised in order to include them fully in the pursuit of economic and social development. When men and women both contribute to economic progress, we have a strong and stable economy. Many women choose to start their own businesses because they want to break through the corporate workplace diversity, gain financial independence, gain social attention, establish their own identities, and strengthen their families, communities, and countries. Scholars, international agencies, and policymakers in advanced economies have become increasingly interested in the emergence and encouragement of women’s entrepreneurship in recent years. Promotional and developmental policies and programmes, such as those that strengthen women’s networks and provide effective financial assistance, entrepreneurship education and training, and the design of schemes that facilitate stronger start-ups to achieve enterprise growth, have been initiated and centred on by international organisations, educational institutions, governments, NGOs, and enterprise associations. At their 2012 annual gathering, the World Economic Forum hailed women business owners as “the way forward”. It is explained that the emergence of women business owners is emblematic of a “New Women's Movement,” and that “forget aid, focus on foreign investment in women entrepreneurs as key drivers for growth and development” (Elias, 2013; Vossenbergh, 2013). This paper attempts to revisit the status of Indian women entrepreneurs, mainly focusing on what changes have

occurred in the past two decades and evaluating the research trends in this study area.

B. Objectives

Following are some of the primary objectives of this present study:

- To study the status and growth of Indian women entrepreneurs
- To evaluate the research trends in women's entrepreneurship
- To analyse current initiatives to determine where there might be room for improvement in terms of women business owners, with a focus on India.

C. Literature Review

After a surge in the number of articles dedicated to this emerging topic, literature evaluations were written to help readers get a handle on where the field currently stood. Since its inception in the late 1970s, the study of women in business has advanced significantly. Yadav and Unni (2016) have synthesised the findings of 19 previously published literature evaluations on female entrepreneurs from 1986-2016. They have also discovered that most of the literature on women entrepreneurs documenting empirical conclusions is mostly from the west. Henry, Foss and Ahl (2016) reported that most of these empirical studies compare male and female entrepreneurs; however, they don't specify industries or provide details about their samples.

According to de Bruin, Brush and Welter (2007), "the special issue of the 'Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice' journal has piqued the interest of the research community; contributors hail from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand, Spain, Australia, China, France, India, Malaysia, Iran, Pakistan, and Ghana." Female entrepreneurs in developing nations like India suffer greater difficulties than their male colleagues, according to an analysis of these difficulties as referred by Goyal and Yadav (2014). Women in underdeveloped countries face these issues in different and more challenging ways. They discover that women in third-world countries have a hard time getting loans, dealing with social and cultural biases, and having confidence in themselves. In their research, Raju and Bhuvaneshwari (2014) tried to pin down what exactly is needed for rural entrepreneurship, what forms it can take, what challenges it faces, and what factors are boosting it. More specifically, they have identified the problems, functions, and demands in rural entrepreneurship and proposed plans for methodological development.

D. Methodology

This study's primary method was locating publications by browsing the databases like EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar using different keywords such as "women entrepreneur" and "female entrepreneur", further combining them with "entrepreneurship", "India", "status", "research", and evaluating the best periodicals covering the larger field of entrepreneurship, specifically Indian women entrepreneurs' work. It is hoped that this theoretical analysis will serve as a springboard for future literature assessments on women business owners.

E. Status of Indian Women Entrepreneurs

In tandem with the expansion of India's economy over the past decade has come a proliferation of new companies and other entrepreneurial endeavours. Men have started most of these organisations. Most Indian women would like to start their own businesses but face unique challenges. Women entrepreneurs in India have been reported to face fewer opportunities, stronger cultural biases, and a dearth of corporate assets like funding, capital, training, and advancement than their male counterparts in several other countries.

Individually, some women aspire to be successful business owners. A number of surveys found motivation in male figures like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs or were exposed to the "startup world" through male entrepreneurs. There is a clearer political commitment to empowering women, and the government has developed programmes encouraging women to take risks and start businesses (Mansur, 2019; Korreck, 2019). Data from the Sixth Census Report of January 2013 to April 2014, is frequently cited in the literature on the topic. In the 2011 census, 13.76 per cent of India's business owners were female, or 8.05 million out of a total of 58.5 million establishments (Sharma, 2016).

Meanwhile, in 2014, the World Bank Enterprise Survey found that women owned 10.7 per cent of businesses. Though more current numbers aren't published, interviewees and the press have all pointed to a boost in the number of businesses led by women (Chingakham, 2018; Goel, 2019). According to the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum (2018), "economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment" are the four most important factors in determining a country's ranking. Overall, India ranks 108th, but its results on health and survival and economic involvement are extremely low. The country also performs poorly on entrepreneurial metrics. The Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs for 2018 placed India at position 52, better than Iran but below Tunisia. Financial availability, educational attainment, and business

friendliness are only a few of the metrics considered by the index (Mathew, 2019; MIWE, 2018).

The economy benefits greatly from the efforts of women-owned enterprises. Out of India's total population of 1.3 billion people, between 22 and 27 million are directly employed by India's 13.5 to 15.7 million companies owned by women. Moreover, women are increasingly taking the helm in their own companies. Indian women are fiercely independent and driven to pursue their own entrepreneurial ventures. Boston Consulting Group claims that companies with at least one female co-founder or founder see an increase of 10% in revenue over the course of five years. These new businesses have a more diverse workforce and hire three times as many women as men. In addition, projections for the forthcoming five years show that companies run by women will expand by 90 per cent. Also, about 45 per cent of new businesses in India are led by women, and the country's government has officially recognised more than 50,000 of them. It was the year 2021 that saw the most number of female-led startups becoming billion-dollar businesses (IBEF, 2022).

F. Research Trends

Despite the growing body of literature on the topic, particularly in developed nations, the realities of women company owners remain mostly unknown. Many scholars, particularly in developing countries, have focused on women entrepreneurship, its barriers and opportunities (Gautam and Mishra, 2016; Raghuvanshi, Agrawal, and Ghosh, 2017). According to studies, women-owned enterprises account for between 25% and 33% of all companies in the formally recognised economy, and they are predicted to play an even more significant role in the unrecognised sectors. India has a relatively recent occurrence of women entering the commercial world compared to other countries. Pickles, powder, and pappads might be seen as natural outgrowths of their cooking operations. However, as knowledge of business and education has increased among women over time, they have begun shifting their focus from the traditional "3Ps" to the "3Modern Es," or "Engineering, Electronics, and Energy." They've done exceptionally well in their pursuits. Women business owners in Gujarat's solar cooker industry, Maharashtra's tiny foundries, and Odisha's capacitor factory have shown that they can outperform their male counterparts when given a fair shot (Munshi, Munshi and Singh, 2011).

Despite the fact that previous studies on women business owners revealed substantial differences between women and men business owners, this study found no such differences. Newer research shows that when comparing the psychological and demographic features of male and female business owners, there are considerably more parallels than differences. Among women business

owners, years in business and prior work experience are the best predictors of future success. According to some international research on female business owners, women tend to prioritise employee participation in decision-making and foster an environment where all ideas are heard. As a whole, men are more likely to run businesses in the manufacturing and other non-service industries, whereas women are more likely to run businesses in the service sector. Women today are not only gaining financial freedom and creating riches for themselves but also creating chances for others, especially other women, through the creation of jobs.

Although female business owners are more inclined to hire women, multiple studies demonstrate that the workforces of women-owned enterprises are more gender-balanced than those of men-owned businesses. Putting money toward female businesses is a surefire way to boost female financial autonomy and general prosperity.

G. Findings

Observing the status of women entrepreneurs and present research trends, it can be said that there is a need to expand the research content of the female entrepreneur beyond an emphasis on the role of chance or make comparisons between different scenarios, specifically in the Indian context. There was a general consensus that the rise of companies started by women was an indication of a shifting culture. Policies related to economic, legislative, family and social standards, labour market arrangements, and the participation of women in business ownership are all examples of exogenous factors that can be investigated by means of a sensitivity analysis. Further, the scientific community's focus has shifted from studying "economic and political challenges" to investigating the "elements that can help close the gender gap" in the past decade (Cardella, Hernández-Sánchez, and Sánchez-García, 2020). From a broad viewpoint, researchers can look into correlations between socioeconomic status, level of education, and the percentage of women who start their own businesses. In order to encourage more young women to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, it would be helpful to learn more about the motivations and experiences of young women from different socioeconomic and social-class backgrounds and cultural settings. In this context, diverse nationalities and cultures could provide a fascinating window into the effects of economic and social stratification.

H. Implications

Undoubtedly, one of the first signs of an evolving world was the emergence of women-founded enterprises. The present study might influence the researchers in

the said field to originate the research gap and produce more fruitful research findings. The possible implications of this study's findings are as follows:

- Constructing speculative justifications for comparing entrepreneurs depending on their sex.
- Applying a feminist lens to expand on current conceptions of entrepreneurship.
- Investigating the business-building strategies employed by women-owned companies.
- Expanding the content and context of women entrepreneurship to the next level so that more recreational research is being produced.
- Applying cutting-edge research techniques to the study of female business owners may be helpful for contemporary researchers.

I. Conclusion

The number of academic articles devoted to the topic of women business owners has exploded in the past three decades. Scholarly research papers, reviews of literature, and other reference materials focusing on female business owners are becoming common, marking a transitional period from the infant to the young adult stages of the field. Women's involvement in business is growing at a rapid clip, suggesting that things are better now than they were in the past. The Indian government is making strides to ensure that women enjoy the same rights and privileges as males in all areas of society, including the workplace, educational institutions, and the democratic landscape.

It can be concluded from the final review that more work needs to be done to establish a solid theoretical foundation for studies of women business owners. Current entrepreneurial concepts can be refined by considering them through the prism of feminist approaches. In addition, research is typically undertaken only in economically developed nations and is limited to their borders. Further expansion of the discipline depends on the establishment of international contacts and the encouragement of professional associations.

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