



INDIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurs play a key role in the economic development of any nation. They possess expertise and innovative concepts to effectively promote and execute the proposal. Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in the worldwide effort to achieve long-term economic growth and social advancement. The presence of women-owned enterprises is significantly rising in the economy of nearly all countries due to factors such as increased industrialization, urbanisation, social laws, greater education, and awareness. The growing representation of women in the business sector as entrepreneurs has altered the demographic makeup of businesses and contributed to the country's economic expansion. Women-owned business companies are increasingly participating in both the community and the economy. This study examines the role and contribution of women entrepreneurs, the challenges they encounter, and provides recommendations for the future advancement of women entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Women entrepreneur, Challenges of women entrepreneurs, Opportunities of women entrepreneurs.

INTRODUCTION

In the current period of liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation, along with the ongoing IT revolution, the world is undergoing rapid and remarkable changes. Political and economic transformations are occurring globally as countries transition from command to demand economies, dictatorships shift towards democratic systems, and monarchs establish new civil institutions. The aforementioned modifications have generated economic prospects for women aspiring to possess and manage enterprises. Today, women entrepreneurs are a distinct group of women who have deviated from conventional paths and are actively pursuing new opportunities for economic engagement. Women are motivated to lead organised firms due to their expertise, knowledge, talents, abilities, inventiveness in business, and a strong desire to make a positive impact. Countries must promptly respond to the challenge by establishing additional support structures to promote entrepreneurship among women. Simultaneously, it is the responsibility of women to emancipate themselves from ingrained patterns of thinking.



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Women entrepreneurs are rapidly emerging as a formidable presence in the business realm. They are not only engaged in business for survival, but also to fulfil their innate desire for creativity and to demonstrate their strengths. Women who have received a formal education are making a significant contribution to societal change. In the future, it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of women entering fields that have traditionally been dominated by men.

Contemporary women are increasingly pursuing professional and technical degrees to meet the demands of the job market. They are excelling in various fields such as design, interior decoration, exporting, publishing, and garment manufacturing, while also actively seeking out new opportunities for economic engagement. Government bodies, NGOs, social scientists, researchers, and foreign agencies have become interested in the difficulties surrounding entrepreneurship among women in India, possibly due to these reasons.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Each study commences by defining a specific set of objectives. These objectives function as both a roadmap and a final destination for more in-depth analysis. This study aims to investigate the following objectives:

- i) To comprehend the role and contribution of women entrepreneurs in India;
- ii) To identify the challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs; and
- iii) To provide recommendations for future opportunities for the advancement of women entrepreneurs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is characterised as a descriptive study. The paper significantly uses secondary data. The supplementary data has been gathered from books, journals, and websites.

Women Entrepreneurs' Role and Contribution in India

Women exert significant influence over the micro enterprise sector in both rural and urban areas of India. According to the official statistical body, about 70 percent of micro companies in India are operated by women. Nevertheless, their involvement in small, medium, and big firms decreases. In addition to engaging in productive activities such as agriculture, trade, and industry, women play many responsibilities in society. They engage in productive endeavours such as agriculture and assume responsibility for tending to the family's needs, including food preparation, healthcare, and education. Women must strive to achieve a balance between many responsibilities, resulting in their ability to multitask well. They are adept at managing their enterprises in addition to fulfilling their other required obligations. Women constitute a greater proportion of those engaged in the informal sector and are also more prevalent in the management of micro and small firms in India. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in the socio-economic progress of the nation. They facilitate income generation for individuals, contribute to household earnings, and provide essential goods and services for local consumption. Nevertheless, this contribution remains



inadequately acknowledged or comprehended, with limited research or statistical data available to offer a comprehensive understanding of women's experiences as business owners, their impact on economic development, or the obstacles they encounter in establishing, overseeing, and expanding their enterprises.

Women entrepreneurs are frequently characterised as "survivalists" due to their prevalence in low-skilled, capital-intensive, informal, and microbusiness sectors. As an extension of their domestic responsibilities, women are more likely to pursue careers in the service sector. The profit is stated to be motivated less by an entrepreneurial spirit and more by the necessity for survival. The proportion of women employed in the microenterprise sector is 74%. A majority of women, exceeding 65%, involved in cottage/handicraft industries (micro enterprises), specifically in the processing of culinary products and beverages.

Economic Contribution

The economic participation of women immediately enhances growth and efficiency in addressing challenges faced by informal businesses. Poverty reduction remains a key concern for policymakers.

i) Capital Creation: Entrepreneurs gather the unused savings of the public by issuing industrial securities. Allocating governmental savings to industry leads to the efficient use of national resources. The rate of capital production experiences a boost, which is crucial for achieving rapid economic expansion.

ii) Increase in Per capita Income: Female entrepreneurs in India have also been capitalising on the available chances. They transform the dormant and underutilised resources such as land, labour, and capital into national revenue and wealth through the production of goods and services. They contribute to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita income, which are crucial indicators of economic development.

iii) Employment Generation: Women entrepreneurs in India are significantly contributing to the creation of jobs, both directly and indirectly. Through the establishment of small-scale industries, they provide employment opportunities to individuals.

Social Contribution

Women entrepreneurs are also making a significant contribution to enhancing balanced regional development and elevating living standards in the country.

i) Promoting Equitable Regional growth: Women entrepreneurs in India can contribute to reducing regional inequities in economic growth. They establish industries in underdeveloped regions to take advantage of the resource benefits and subsidies provided by the government.

ii) Enhancement of living standards: The establishment of small-scale companies can alleviate the scarcity of critical goods and introduce new items. Female entrepreneurs in this



nation are manufacturing a diverse range of products on a significant scale and selling them at affordable prices, so leading to an enhancement in the quality of life.

iii) Innovation: Innovation is crucial for entrepreneurship. It refers to the utilisation of an invention for commercial purposes. As an innovator, the entrepreneur takes on the position of a trailblazer and a prominent figure in the industry.

Entrepreneurs have made significant contributions to the development of new products and improvements to existing products and services. All of these factors have contributed to economic growth through the creation of jobs and increased income, among other benefits.

Other Contributions

Women entrepreneurs play a key role in shaping the culture of society. Women in our country are diligent workers who actively engage in activities outside the home, fostering a strong sense of independence and similar qualities.

Therefore, women entrepreneurs in our nation are actively involved in environmental conservation, both directly and indirectly. They also play a crucial role in promoting backward and forward integration and function as catalysts, so making significant contributions to the economic development of the country.

CHALLENGES THAT INDIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS FACE

There are numerous issues that women confront at various stages of their business, beginning with their original start-up and continuing to run their business. Their numerous issues are as follows:

1. Family Obligations: Indian women exhibit profound emotional ties to their families. It is their responsibility to perform all housework and care for the children and other family members. Family obligations, such as providing additional care for their spouse, children, and in-laws, consume a substantial amount of their time and effort. Such a circumstance would make it exceedingly challenging to concentrate and effectively operate the business.

2. Patriarchal Society: Historically, entrepreneurship has been perceived as a domain exclusively for males, with the notion of women engaging in entrepreneurial endeavours being regarded as an unattainable aspiration. Any departure from the standard is disapproved of and, whenever feasible, promptly restrained. Women are also confronted with role conflicts when they embark on entrepreneurial endeavours. Women encounter significant challenges when confronting such conflicts and managing the dual role.

3. Inadequate Education: The educational attainment of women in India is significantly deficient. As a result of inadequate education, female entrepreneurs are not informed about the advancements in technology, production methods, marketing strategies, or other forms of government assistance that could potentially foster their success.

4. Social Obstacles: The prevailing traditions and customs in Indian societies regarding women can occasionally impede their progress and success. Castes and religions coexist in dominance and impede the progress of women entrepreneurs.

5. Financial Challenges: Funding acquisition, working capital management, and credit resource scarcity are issues that continue to persist in the masculine domain. Women have yet



to achieve substantial progress in terms of quantity. The fact that marketing and financial issues pose such an obstacle is of great assistance to women.

6. Rigid Competition: A considerable number of women-owned enterprises lack flawless organisational structures. However, they encounter formidable competition from well-organized industries.

7. High Cost of Production: A significant contributor to the high cost of production is women entrepreneurs' resistance to or sluggish incorporation of evolving technologies, which renders them susceptible to technological obsolescence.

8. Limited Risk-Bearing Capacity: Indian women are timid, feeble, and submissive by nature. They are incapable of enduring the level of risk that is necessary for operating a business. Insufficient external education, training, and financial backing further diminish their capacity to assume the risks associated with entrepreneurial endeavours.

9. Women's mobility in India is significantly restricted and has emerged as a concern owing to adherence to traditional values and their incapability to operate motor vehicles. Individuals who continue to venture out at night for business purposes while travelling alone continue to be met with suspicion. Younger women may experience discomfort when interacting with males who are more interested in them personally than in work-related matters.

10. Insufficient Entrepreneurial Aptitude: The absence of entrepreneurial aptitude among women entrepreneurs is a significant concern. They do not possess an entrepreneurial inclination. Despite participating in numerous training programmes focused on entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurs still encounter challenges and obstacles when it comes to organisational functioning.

11. Strict Managerial Capability: In contemporary times, effective management has evolved into a specialised occupation that demands such proficiency. Female entrepreneurs exhibit limited proficiency in managerial responsibilities such as staffing, directing, motivating, organising, regulating, and staffing an enterprise. As a result, women's inadequate and restricted managerial capabilities have emerged as a hindrance to their ability to effectively operate the enterprise.

12. Adherence to Legal Procedures: Women entrepreneurs face significant challenges in completing the necessary legal formalities for operating their businesses due to the pervasiveness of corrupt practices within government agencies and the protracted processing times for obtaining licences, electricity, water, and shed allotments. Under such circumstances, it is difficult for female entrepreneurs to maintain focus on the efficient operation of the business.

13. Since women are unable to physically perform the aforementioned tasks—marketing, distribution, and money collection—middlemen are required to assist them. They are frequently exploited by middlemen who pose as helpful. Their own profit margin is added to the total, leading to decreased sales and profit.

14. Insufficient Self-Assurance: In contemporary times, a prevalent issue among women is a dearth of self-assurance, determination, a physically robust outlook, and hopefulness, among others. They are perpetually terrified of making errors while performing their assigned tasks, and furthermore, they lack the initiative to take risks and deal with uncertainty. Therefore, the aforementioned psychological factors frequently impede their progress towards attaining success in the realm of business.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR'S GROWTH

A lack of education is a curse in today's world, whereas education is a benefit to mankind. There has been a meteoric rise in the number of female entrepreneurs around the globe. It is easy to see that women entrepreneurs are making waves in India, and their impact on the country's economy is substantial. As more and more women join traditionally male-dominated fields like medicine, law, and finance, as well as more traditionally male-dominated fields like trade, industry, and engineering, the contributions of female entrepreneurs to economic growth are becoming increasingly apparent. A sea change is occurring in the business landscape and the way industries are structured. Information technology has revolutionised the way businesses operate. Women can achieve the economic and social independence they desire and the success they require when they operate their own businesses. For the future of our nation's economy, company ownership is crucial. On a global scale, women are revolutionising the way business is conducted today. At the end of the day, female company owners deserve respect for themselves, their work, and the enormous difference women make to the global economy.

All development projects should prioritise women as a distinct target group. Women should be provided with greater educational facilities and programmes by the government. Women in the community need access to quality management training programmes. Promote women's involvement in decision-making processes. It is important to provide women in the community with vocational training so that they can learn about management and the industrial process. It is important to provide women entrepreneurs with training that focuses on professional competence and leadership abilities. There has to be an emphasis on women's marketability and profitability in all training programmes. Women business owners should be legally allowed to apply for and receive loans from state finance corporations and other lending institutions for purposes solely connected to their trade. Finally, women's development corporation has to secure long-term funding.

Several strategies are provided to encourage women to start their own businesses, taking into account the aforementioned challenges as well as others. These therapies or solutions can be clearly comprehended as follows:

- Encouraging Women entrepreneurship is crucial for addressing the issues of underemployment and unemployment in society.
- Education has had a crucial role in enhancing the involvement of women in entrepreneurial endeavours. Formal education instills women the confidence to effectively address business challenges.
- There should be a continuous effort to encourage, instill confidence in, inspire, and support women entrepreneurs.
- The government should enhance educational facilities and implement programmes specifically designed for women.
- Continuous monitoring, enhancement of training programmes, practical experience, and personality development programmes should be implemented to enhance their overall personality standards.
- Creation of specialised training institutions to improve their degree of expertise, skills, and ability to take risks, so boosting their capacities. Training centres should



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offer cost-free training to aspiring female entrepreneurs, and the Entrepreneurship Development Programme should have a stronger focus on practical application.

- A female entrepreneur should establish herself as a successful individual and serve as a role model.
- Given that children often imitate their parents, the resulting impact would be inherent.
- Creation of specialised training institutions to improve their work-related knowledge, skills, risk-taking capacities, and overall capabilities.
- Finance is an indispensable requirement for any organisation. The banking sector lacks adequate responsiveness to address social banking demands and has been unable to overcome hurdles that impede women from utilising or obtaining loans. It is necessary to provide appropriate provisions for providing lending facilities to women entrepreneurs at a reduced interest rate, considering their increasing requirements.
- Establishing microcredit and enterprise credit systems for women entrepreneurs at the local level.
- Priority should be given to providing land or sheds to deserving women entrepreneurs.
- To boost women entrepreneurship in the rural sector, one strategy is to revitalise activities and skills related to traditional crafts or practices that they are familiar with.
- An establishment of a Women Entrepreneur's Guidance Cell is necessary to address the many challenges faced by women entrepreneurs across the entire state.
- An optimistic shift in societal attitudes, acknowledging the significance of women as entrepreneurs, could result in the creation of a conducive atmosphere where women can effectively utilise their entrepreneurial abilities.
- Providing initial investment, empowerment programmes, and a fund specifically for female entrepreneurs to support them financially.
- To enhance the availability and accessibility of favourable interest rates, resources, and programmes for female entrepreneurs to thrive in the realm of business. Therefore, by implementing the aforementioned methods in both word and action, the issues related to women can be resolved.

CONCLUSION

Women in India are commonly perceived to be both monetarily and socially reliant on male individuals. Women entrepreneurs encountered numerous challenges such as limited access to education, societal obstacles, regulatory requirements, high production costs, a male-dominated society, restricted managerial skills, and lack of self-assurance. There are other factors, such as pull and push forces, that have an influence on women entrepreneurs. The government implements numerous measures to promote the advancement of women entrepreneurs across all five-year programmes. Women possess the capacity and resolve to establish, maintain, and oversee their own business in a highly organised manner. With the necessary support and encouragement from society, family, and the government, these female entrepreneurs can become integral members of the national economy and make significant contributions to India's economic advancement.



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