



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.428 (SJIF 2026)

Women and Entrepreneurship: Creating Identity Beyond Gender Bias

Dr. Ashwini

Associate Professor,
Maharani's Arts College for Women,
Mysore (Karnataka, India)

DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2026-49267514/IRJHIS2606014>

Abstract:

Entrepreneurship has historically been characterized as a male-dominated domain shaped by gendered assumptions regarding leadership, innovation, and risk-taking. However, women's participation in entrepreneurial activities has increased significantly in recent decades, particularly in emerging economies such as India. This paper adopts a descriptive research design to examine the socio-economic and psychological dimensions influencing women's entrepreneurship. It analyzes structural barriers such as limited access to finance, gender stereotypes, and work-life balance constraints, alongside internal psychological factors including self-efficacy, motivation, and risk perception. Drawing on recent India-specific data, the study highlights both progress and persistent disparities in women's entrepreneurial participation. The paper proposes a conceptual framework illustrating the interaction between socio-economic and psychological determinants. The findings suggest that while gender bias continues to influence entrepreneurial opportunities, women are actively redefining entrepreneurial identities and contributing to inclusive economic development.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurship, gender bias, socio-economic factors, psychological factors, India, work-life balance

1. Introduction:

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a catalyst for economic development, innovation, and employment generation. Historically, entrepreneurial activity has been dominated by men, reflecting broader gender inequalities embedded within socio-economic systems. In recent years, however, women's participation in entrepreneurship has gained momentum, prompting increased academic and policy attention.

An entrepreneur is an individual who initiates and manages a business venture while assuming associated risks and rewards. Classical economist Jean-Baptiste Say conceptualized entrepreneurship as the reallocation of resources toward higher productivity. In contemporary economies, entrepreneurs serve as agents of transformation, introducing innovation and driving growth.

Gender, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with men and women (WHO, 2020). These constructs significantly influence access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power. In India, gender norms continue to shape entrepreneurial participation, though recent developments indicate gradual progress.

This paper examines the intersection of gender and entrepreneurship, focusing on socio-economic and psychological determinants, with specific reference to the Indian context.

2. Literature Review:

Existing literature identifies multiple structural and cultural barriers faced by women entrepreneurs. Women are less likely to access financial capital due to institutional bias and lack of collateral (Cardella et al., 2020). Venture capital ecosystems often exhibit gendered investment patterns, disadvantaging women-led enterprises.

Motivational factors have also been extensively explored. Women frequently pursue entrepreneurship to gain autonomy, flexibility, and control over their professional environment, particularly in response to constraints in traditional employment (Meek & Sullivan, 2012).

Gender stereotypes play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial identity. Traits such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and risk-taking are often associated with masculinity, whereas women are perceived as risk-averse and emotionally driven. These perceptions influence both self-evaluation and external assessments.

Psychological research highlights the importance of self-efficacy, resilience, and risk perception. Although women are often considered more cautious, their approach tends to emphasize sustainability and long-term stability (Williams, 2004).

Recent studies focusing on India emphasize persistent gender gaps despite policy interventions, highlighting the need for a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

3. Methodology:

This study adopts a **descriptive research design** based on secondary data. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and recent statistical publications (2023–2025). The study synthesizes existing literature to identify key socio-economic and psychological determinants influencing women's entrepreneurship, particularly in India.

Conceptual Framework: The study proposes a conceptual framework integrating **socio-economic factors** and **psychological factors** as key determinants of women's entrepreneurial participation.

Independent Variables:

- Socio-Economic Factors
 - Access to finance
 - Property rights

- Education and skills
- Institutional support (policies, schemes)
- Social norms and gender roles
- Psychological Factors
 - Self-efficacy
 - Motivation (push/pull factors)
 - Risk perception
 - Resilience
 - Work–life balance perception

Moderating Variables:

- Family support
- Mentorship and networks
- Digital access and technology

Dependent Variable:

- Women’s Entrepreneurial Participation and Success

Outcome:

- Economic contribution
- Empowerment
- Inclusive development

4. Socio-Economic Perspective (India-Specific Analysis):

Women’s participation in entrepreneurship in India has increased steadily, yet structural inequalities continue to limit their full potential. According to recent estimates, women account for approximately **14% of total entrepreneurs in India** (Women Entrepreneurs Review, 2024), indicating a substantial gender gap. Furthermore, women-owned enterprises constitute only **20–22% of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** (Economic Survey of India, 2025).

Despite this underrepresentation, women entrepreneurs are making significant contributions to employment generation and economic development. It is estimated that women-led enterprises employ **over 27 million people in India**, demonstrating their growing economic impact (NITI Aayog, 2023).

Access to finance remains one of the most critical challenges. The **credit gap for women-led MSMEs in India is estimated at over USD 158 billion**, reflecting systemic barriers such as lack of collateral, limited credit history, and gender bias in lending practices (International Finance Corporation [IFC], 2023). However, encouraging trends are emerging: women accounted for nearly **35% of business loan borrowers in 2024**, indicating improving financial

inclusion (Economic Times, 2025).

Government initiatives have played a significant role in promoting women entrepreneurship. Programs such as *Startup India*, *Stand-Up India*, and *Mudra Yojana* have enhanced access to funding and institutional support. As of 2024, more than **73,000 startups with at least one woman director** have been officially recognized under *Startup India* (Press Information Bureau, 2024). Additionally, **over 68% of Mudra loan accounts are held by women**, highlighting the role of microfinance in empowering women entrepreneurs (Ministry of Finance, 2024).

Digitalization has further expanded opportunities. The rise of e-commerce platforms, social media marketing, and digital payment systems has enabled women—particularly in rural and semi-urban areas—to enter entrepreneurship with relatively low capital investment. This shift has contributed to the growth of home-based and small-scale enterprises.

However, socio-cultural norms continue to impose constraints. Women are often expected to prioritize family responsibilities, which limits their time, mobility, and risk-taking ability. These structural and cultural barriers collectively shape the entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in India.

5. **Psychological Perspective:**

Psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and outcomes among women. These factors are deeply influenced by social conditioning, cultural expectations, and lived experiences.

One of the most significant barriers is **entrepreneurial self-efficacy**, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully start and manage a business. Studies suggest that women often report lower self-efficacy compared to men due to internalized gender stereotypes (Cardella et al., 2020). This can result in reduced entrepreneurial intention despite comparable competence.

Fear of failure is another critical psychological constraint. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2023), women in developing economies are more likely to cite fear of failure as a deterrent to entrepreneurship compared to men. This fear is often amplified by societal expectations and the stigma associated with business failure.

At the same time, **motivation** acts as a powerful enabler. Women entrepreneurs are often driven by both **push factors** (e.g., unemployment, lack of career advancement) and **pull factors** (e.g., independence, flexibility, self-fulfillment) (Meek & Sullivan, 2012). In India, entrepreneurship is increasingly viewed as a pathway to financial independence and social mobility for women.

Risk perception also differs significantly. Women tend to adopt a **risk-mitigated approach**, focusing on sustainability and gradual growth rather than aggressive expansion. While

traditionally viewed as risk aversion, this approach often leads to more stable and resilient business models (Williams, 2004).

Resilience and adaptability are key strengths. Women entrepreneurs frequently manage multiple roles, including professional, familial, and social responsibilities. This multi-role engagement enhances emotional intelligence, time management, and problem-solving capabilities.

Finally, **social support systems** play a critical role. Family encouragement, mentorship, and peer networks significantly influence entrepreneurial confidence and persistence. The absence of such support can act as a major deterrent, particularly in conservative socio-cultural settings.

6. Discussion:

The analysis reveals that women's entrepreneurship is shaped by a complex interplay of structural and psychological factors. Socio-economic barriers such as limited access to finance, property ownership, and institutional support are reinforced by cultural norms and gender stereotypes.

At the same time, psychological factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, and resilience influence how women perceive and respond to these challenges. The interaction between these dimensions creates a layered and dynamic entrepreneurial environment.

India presents a paradoxical scenario. On one hand, the country has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing startup ecosystems, supported by strong policy initiatives and digital transformation. On the other hand, gender disparities in entrepreneurship remain significant.

The increasing participation of women in sectors such as e-commerce, education, healthcare, and digital services indicates a shift toward more inclusive growth. However, women remain underrepresented in high-growth and capital-intensive sectors such as technology and manufacturing.

Policy interventions have yielded positive outcomes, but their impact is uneven across regions and socio-economic groups. Rural women, in particular, continue to face greater barriers due to limited access to education, technology, and financial resources.

A holistic approach addressing both **structural inequalities** and **psychological barriers** is essential. Without addressing deeply embedded gender norms, policy measures alone may not achieve desired outcomes.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

To promote women entrepreneurship in India, the following measures are essential:

1. Enhancing Financial Inclusion

- Expand collateral-free loan schemes
- Promote gender-sensitive lending practices

2. Strengthening Skill Development

- Provide entrepreneurship training and digital literacy programs
- Encourage STEM participation among women

3. Improving Institutional Support

- Strengthen incubation centers and mentorship programs
- Promote women-focused startup networks

4. Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers

- Encourage shared domestic responsibilities
- Promote positive representation of women entrepreneurs

5. Leveraging Digital Platforms

- Expand access to e-commerce and digital tools
- Support rural women through digital inclusion initiatives

8. FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE: Future research can focus on:

- Empirical validation of the proposed conceptual framework
- Sector-specific analysis of women entrepreneurship
- Impact of digital transformation on women-led businesses
- Intersectional analysis (caste, class, region)
- Longitudinal studies on sustainability of women enterprises

9. Conclusion:

Women entrepreneurship in India is undergoing a significant transformation. Despite persistent gender bias and structural challenges, women are increasingly contributing to economic growth and innovation.

Bridging the gender gap requires multi-dimensional interventions, including financial inclusion, policy support, education, and societal change. Encouraging women's entrepreneurial participation is critical for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Future research should focus on empirical validation of the proposed framework, sector-specific analysis, and the impact of digital technologies on women entrepreneurship.

References:

1. Cardella, G. M., Hernández-Sánchez, B. R., & Sánchez-García, J. C. (2020). Women entrepreneurship: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*.
2. Economic Survey of India. (2025). Women-owned MSMEs and entrepreneurship trends.
3. Economic Times. (2025). Women borrowers and business loan participation in India.
4. Meek, W. R., & Sullivan, D. M. (2012). Gender and entrepreneurship: A review and process model. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*.
5. Press Information Bureau. (2024). Women entrepreneurs under Startup India initiative.

Government of India.

6. Williams, D. R. (2004). Effects of childcare activities on the duration of self-employment in Europe. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 28(5), 467–485.
7. Women Entrepreneurs Review. (2024). Only 14% of entrepreneurs in India are female.
8. World Health Organization. (2020). Gender and health.
9. World Economic Forum. (2023). Female entrepreneurs in India and funding challenges.
10. International Finance Corporation. (2023). *Financing women entrepreneurs in India*.
11. Ministry of Finance. (2024). *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana annual report*. Government of India.
12. NITI Aayog. (2023). *Women entrepreneurship platform report*. Government of India.
13. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2023). *Global report on entrepreneurship*.
14. Economic Survey of India. (2025). *MSME and gender statistics*. Government of India.

