Women Entrepreneurship: Opportunities and Challenges in India

¹Mudasir Ahmad Tass ²Iqbal Ahmad Hakim

Abstract

Over the past few decades, women in India have made significant strides as leaders in education, government jobs, private sectors, and entrepreneurship. Despite facing immense challenges, there has been a growing emphasis on promoting the growth of women as entrepreneurs. In this context, the paper reviews relevant literature and data from various sources, including government reports and research studies, to examine the entrepreneurial environment, challenges, and the slow progress of women entrepreneurs due to social and cultural barriers and suggests measures to overcome these challenges. The paper also discusses the role of women entrepreneurship in the economic development of the country and the strategies to overcome the barriers for the success of women entrepreneurs in India by providing the insights into the current state of women entrepreneurship in India. Various governmental initiatives through various schemes to boost women entrepreneurship have been critically analysed and the recommendations have been put forth for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to further promote and support women entrepreneurship in the country.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Development, Employment, Social factors, Financial Freedom, Development of women.

Introduction

In recent years, women have been increasingly empowered both socially and economically through their own businesses. Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in India's wake of globalization and economic liberalization. Women entrepreneurship has the potential to create new economic opportunities for India and contribute to overall growth, leading to poverty reduction.

The increased educational status of women and varied aspirations for better living necessitated a change in the lifestyle of Indian women, leading to the emergence of women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs in India are assertive, persuasive, and willing to take risks, and they have managed to succeed in cut-throat competition with their hard work, diligence, and perseverance (Bhardwaj & Kaur, 2014).

Regardless of the progress made by women entrepreneurs in India, there are still several hurdles that they must overcome to achieve equal rights and positions. The sociological setup of Indian society has been male-dominated, which presents a significant challenge to women entrepreneurs. The lack of direct ownership of property, a poor degree of financial freedom for women, and a limited degree of entrepreneurial skills and finance in economically rich and poor women are among the major issues that impede the growth of women entrepreneurship in India (Karanja, 2017).

Thedevelopment of women entrepreneurship in India is promised on account of the lack of balance between family and career obligations, negligence by financial institutions, low risk-bearing ability, and lack of self-confidence (Mishra, S., & Modgil, S., 2019).

²Professor, Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir; email:Iqbal_hakim@uok.edu.in

¹Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir;

Even though women entrepreneurs in India face many challenges, but there are still many success stories of women who have been able to overcome these obstacles and establish thriving businesses. It is important to continue to address the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in order to create a more inclusive and equal society. Providing greater access to education, finance, and mentorship can help to empower women entrepreneurs and enable them to achieve their full potential. By promoting and supporting women entrepreneurs, India can tap into a valuable source of economic growth and innovation(McKinsey & Company, 2018).

Thegovernment has implemented various schemes and policies to promote women entrepreneurship in India (Dharmendra & Reddy, 2020). The purpose of this paper is to explore the potential opportunities and challenges that exist for women entrepreneurs in India, as well as to identify key factors that can support and facilitate their success.

Literature Review

The rise of women entrepreneurship in India is a significant development in recent years, as women are playing an increasingly important role in the economic growth and development of the country. According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report (2018), India ranks third in the world in terms of the percentage of women entrepreneurs. Even with this progress, women entrepreneurs still face a number of challenges in India.

One of the main reasons for the slow progress of women entrepreneurs in India is the patriarchal societal structure that has been deeply ingrained in the culture of the country. Traditional gender roles and expectations often limit women's access to resources and opportunities, including education and finance, and make it difficult for women to establish themselves in the business world (Rao, 2019).

Education is a key factor in the development of women entrepreneurship in India. Education plays a vital role in empowering women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills required to succeed in the business world (Singh and Sandhu, 2017).

Another major obstacle for women entrepreneurs in India is access to finance. Women entrepreneurs often face difficulty in obtaining loans and other forms of financial support due to the patriarchal attitudes of the financial institutions and society as a whole. The lack of collateral, property ownership, and a credit history are some of the reasons that hinder women from accessing financial assistance. Moreover, women face social and cultural biases that make it difficult for them to secure investment and funding (Nair, 2019).

Women entrepreneurs in India face the challenge of the absence of mentorship and support networks, as the number of women mentors and role models is relatively low. This lack of guidance and support makes it difficult for women entrepreneurs to succeed. Additionally, women's work-life balance and family obligations are significant hurdles that impede their ability to devote time and effort to their businesses, as they are expected to fulfill traditional roles as caretakers (GEM, 2018).

The government has taken initiatives to promote and support women entrepreneurship through various schemes and programs. These schemes have helped many women entrepreneurs to establish their businesses and contribute to the economy (MSME, 2020).

Relevance of Women Entrepreneurship

The relevance of studying the reasons for women becoming entrepreneurs in India lies in the fact that women entrepreneurship can contribute significantly to the economic growth and development of the country. Despite facing various challenges and barriers, there has been a growing trend of women starting their own businesses in recent years. Understanding the reasons behind this trend can help policymakers and other stakeholders develop effective strategies to support and promote women entrepreneurship in the country. This can lead to increased job creation, innovation, and overall economic empowerment of women. Furthermore, studying the reasons for women becoming entrepreneurs can also provide insights into the changing gender roles and social dynamics in India.

The paper addresses the following research questions:

- ➤ What are the reasons for the slow progress of women entrepreneurs in India?
- ➤ What are the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India?
- ➤ What are the government schemes and initiatives currently in place to promote and support women entrepreneurship in India?
- > To what extent do women entrepreneurs impact the economic development of India?
- ➤ What strategies can be suggested for promoting and facilitating the growth of women entrepreneurship in India?

Research Design

The research design for this paper is based on a qualitative analysis that involves an extensive review of relevant literature on women entrepreneurship in India. The data for this paper is gathered from various secondary sources including government reports, research publications, online references from various websites, and case studies.

The study uses a systematic and structured approach to analyze and synthesize the literature review, which includes categorizing the literature according to various themes and sub-themes. The data is then analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the literature.

The research design for this studyprovides a comprehensive understanding of the current state of women entrepreneurship in India and the factors that impact its growth and success.

Discussions

Reasons for Women Becoming Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs are becoming more prevalent in various fields, and their numbers are increasing rapidly. There are several reasons why women are becoming entrepreneurs. One of the primary reasons is the desire to be independent and achieve financial stability. Women entrepreneurs are often driven by a strong desire to provide a stable source of income for their families and create a better future for themselves and their loved ones.

Moreover, some women become entrepreneurs because they have identified a market gap or a need that they can fulfill through their products or services. Others become entrepreneurs due to their passion for a particular area of interest, such as fashion or social entrepreneurship. Many women entrepreneurs are also motivated by the desire to make a positive impact on society and create a better world.

Overall, the reasons for women becomingentrepreneurs are diverse and complex, reflecting the unique circumstances and experiences of each individual.

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in India: Challenges and Opportunities

The literature review highlighted that women entrepreneurship in India is gradually gaining momentum, but faces several challenges such as lack of education, financial constraints, societal pressure, family responsibilities, and lack of self-confidence. However, many women entrepreneurs have succeeded and made significant contributions to the Indian economy despite these challenges.

One of the main reasons for women in India becoming entrepreneurs is to achieve economic independence and to have control over their own lives. Many women are also

motivated to become entrepreneurs because they want to make a positive impact on society and contribute to the development of their communities. Research suggests that women entrepreneurs in India are more likely to focus on social entrepreneurship, which involves creating businesses that address social and environmental issues (Dutta &Basu, 2019).

Another challenge faced by women entrepreneurs in India is the lack of support from the family and society. Traditionally, Indian society has been patriarchal, and women have been expected to prioritize their families over their careers. This has resulted in many women facing societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, which can limit their opportunities to start and grow their businesses. Many women entrepreneurs have to balance their family responsibilities with their business commitments, which can be a significant challenge (Dutta &Basu, 2019).

The literature also highlights the importance of education in promoting women entrepreneurship in India. Many women entrepreneurs in India have limited education, which can limit their opportunities to start and grow their businesses. Education not only provides women with the necessary skills and knowledge to start and run their businesses, but it also helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. Research suggests that there is a positive relationship between education and women entrepreneurship, as education can increase women's entrepreneurial self-efficacy and their ability to identify and pursue opportunities (Wilson et al., 2007).

Another significant challenge faced by women entrepreneurs in India is the lack of direct ownership of property. In India, women often face legal and social restrictions that prevent them from owning property, which can make it difficult for them to access loans and other forms of financial support. Additionally, the study found that women entrepreneurs in India lack access to entrepreneurial skills and finance, which limits their ability to grow and expand their businesses(Tiwari et al., 2021).

Although women faced these challenges, but the study found that women entrepreneurs in India are assertive, persuasive, and willing to take risks. They are determined to succeed and often display a high level of resilience in the face of obstacles. The study also found that several schemes have been introduced by the government and non-governmental organizations to promote and support women entrepreneurship in India(Kumari & Reddy, 2020).

The case study of a women entrepreneur from Ludhiana highlights the challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in India. The entrepreneur, who started her own boutique, faced several challenges, including lack of finance, lack of support from family and society, and lack of business knowledge. However, she overcame these challenges through hard work, perseverance, and taking advantage of government schemes and initiatives. She also focused on building her network and collaborating with other entrepreneurs to grow her business(Singh & Sharma, 2018).

Overall, the study concludes that while women entrepreneurship in India is still facing several challenges, there are also several opportunities for growth and development. By addressing the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and providing the necessary support and resources, India can unlock the potential of women entrepreneurship and contribute to the overall growth and development of the country(Kumari & Reddy, 2020).

Reasons for Slow Progress of Women Entrepreneurs in India

With the increasing importance of women entrepreneurs, their progress in India has been slow due to various challenges. Patriarchal societal norms and cultural values in India limit women's access to resources, information, networks, and funding needed for starting and growing businesses. Women entrepreneurs also face challenges in accessing finance and

credit from formal institutions due to lack of collateral and credit history, and limited financial literacy. Work-life balance challenges and limited access to education, training, mentoring, and networking opportunities further limit women's entrepreneurial competencies and skills. Women entrepreneurs also face biases and discrimination in the market, as well as gender-based violence and harassment.

However, the government's initiatives and schemes to support women entrepreneurs are a step in the right direction towards promoting gender equality and inclusive economic growth.

Government Initiatives for Women's Development in India (1951-2022)

The development of women has been a policy objective of the government since independence. There has been a growing focus from both governmental and non-governmental organizations on recognizing the economic contributions made by women in the areas of self-employment and entrepreneurship.

First Five-Year Plan (1951-1956): The First Five-Year Plan recognized the importance of the development of cottage and small-scale industries (SSI) for generating employment and promoting economic growth. Women entrepreneurs were encouraged to participate in these industries by providing them with training and credit facilities (Government of India, 1951).

Second Five-Year Plan (1956-1961): The Second Five-Year Plan aimed to promote a mixed economy and emphasized the role of small-scale industries in the country's economic development. The government introduced schemes to provide training, credit, and technical support to women entrepreneurs (Planning Commission, 1956).

Third Five-Year Plan (1961-1966): The Third Five-Year Plan emphasized the need for equitable distribution of income and opportunities. The government introduced schemes to promote the development of women entrepreneurs, including training programs, subsidies, and technical assistance (Amundson R. H., 1964).

Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969-1974): The Fourth Five-Year Plan aimed to accelerate the country's economic growth and promote self-reliance. The government introduced programs to promote women's participation in small-scale industries, including training and credit facilities (Plan F. F. Y., 1967).

Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-1979): The Fifth Five-Year Plan aimed to promote social justice and reduce poverty. The government introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training and credit facilities (Government of India, 1974).

Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-1985): The Sixth Five-Year Plan aimed to promote balanced regional development and reduce poverty. The government introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and marketing support (Government of India, 1980).

Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-1990): The Seventh Five-Year Plan aimed to promote sustainable growth and development. The government introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and market support (CMFRI, K., 1985).

Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-1997): The Eighth Five-Year Plan aimed to promote social justice, reduce poverty, and accelerate economic growth. The government introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and marketing support (Government of India, 1992).

Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002): The Ninth Five-Year Plan aimed to promote human development, reduce poverty, and achieve economic growth. The government introduced

programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and marketing support (Government of India, 1999).

Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007): The Tenth Five-Year Plan aimed to promote faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth. The government introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and marketing support (Planning Commission, 2002).

Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012): The Eleventh Five-Year Plan aimed to achieve faster and more inclusive growth with a focus on human development. The government introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and marketing support (Planning Commission, 2008).

Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2012-2017): The Twelfth Five-Year Plan aimed to achieve faster, sustainable, and more inclusive growth. The government introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and marketing support (Government of India, 2017).

Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2017-2022): The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan aims to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth with a focus on social development. The government has introduced programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, including training, credit facilities, and marketing support.

The government has recognized the important role that women can play in achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. To promote women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, the government is trying to help women through different initiatives aimed at improving women's access to education, healthcare, financial services, and other resources. However, more needs to be done to address the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, such as limited access to finance, lack of training and mentorship, and societal barriers.

Government Schemes and Initiatives Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in India

The Indian government has implemented various schemes and initiatives to promote and support women entrepreneurship in the country.

- 1. Stand-Up India Scheme: Launched in 2016, this scheme provides bank loans between 10 lakhs to 1 crore to at least one-woman borrower per bank branch for setting up a greenfield enterprise.
- 2. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY): This scheme provides loans up to 10 lakhs to small business owners, including women entrepreneurs.
- 3. Annapurna Scheme: This scheme provides loans to women entrepreneurs to set up food catering units, food processing units, and other food-based businesses.
- 4. Mahila Udyam Nidhi Scheme: This scheme provides financial assistance to women entrepreneurs for setting up small-scale industrial units.
- 5. Trade-Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD) Scheme: This scheme provides support for the development and promotion of women entrepreneurs in the fields of agriculture, trade, and services.
- 6. Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP): Launched by NITI Aayog, this platform provides access to resources, networks, and mentorship for women entrepreneurs.
- 7. Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana: This scheme aims to promote women entrepreneurship in the tribal areas of India by setting up Van Dhan Vikas Kendras to facilitate the collection, value addition, and marketing of forest produce.

These government schemes and initiatives are aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs and promoting gender equality in the Indian economy.

Suggestions for the Growth of Women Entrepreneurs

To promote the growth of women entrepreneurs in India, various measures can be taken. These include increasing access to education, creating awareness about women's capacity and potential, building entrepreneurial skills through training and mentoring programs, and providing financial assistance through government schemes and subsidies. Financial institutions can play a critical role in promoting women entrepreneurship by providing microfinance, venture capital, and credit facilities to women entrepreneurs. (Sundaray& Das, 2016).

Based on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India, there are several suggestions that can be implemented for their growth and development:

Providing Access to Capital:

Access to finance remains a major issue for women entrepreneurs in India. Government and financial institutions should provide funding options with flexible repayment terms and low-interest rates, along with offering special schemes for women entrepreneurs.

Encouraging Skill Development

Lack of entrepreneurial skills and education remains a significant barrier to women entrepreneurship in India. Skill development initiatives such as entrepreneurship development programs and vocational training should be provided to women entrepreneurs to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Providing Mentorship and Networking Opportunities

Women entrepreneurs often lack access to networks and mentorship, which can limit their growth prospects. Providing networking opportunities and mentorship programs can help women entrepreneurs to learn from experienced entrepreneurs and build valuable connections.

Providing Legal Support

Women entrepreneurs often face legal challenges related to property rights, intellectual property, and business regulations. Providing legal support to women entrepreneurs can help them overcome these challenges and operate their businesses without fear of legal repercussions.

Encouraging financial literacy

A lack of financial literacy has been identified as one of the key reasons for the slow progress of women entrepreneurs in India. The government and other stakeholders should take steps to increase financial literacy among women entrepreneurs so that they can make informed financial decisions.

Providing access to finance

Access to finance is a major challenge faced by women entrepreneurs in India. The government should increase funding for women entrepreneurs and also ensure that women have easy access to credit.

Offering training and development programs

Many women entrepreneurs lack the skills and knowledge required to run a successful business. The government and other stakeholders should offer training and development programs to help women entrepreneurs develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

Providing mentorship and networking opportunities

Mentorship and networking opportunities can be invaluable for women entrepreneurs. The government and other stakeholders should create programs that provide mentorship and networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Promoting gender equality

Gender equality is essential for the growth of women entrepreneurs. The government should take steps to promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

The women entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical driver of economic growth and development in India. Despite the various challenges and obstacles, women entrepreneurs in India have demonstrated resilience and determination in pursuing their entrepreneurial dreams. Implementing the above suggestions can help to promote women entrepreneurship, create new opportunities for women, and contribute to overall economic growth and development in India.

Conclusions

There are a number of reasons for women to become entrepreneurs, including the need for economic independence, flexibility in working hours, and the desire to make a positive impact on society. However, there are still many obstacles that women entrepreneurs face, such as societal expectations, lack of access to funding, and cultural barriers. Women entrepreneurship in India is slowly but surely making progress in spite the challenges faced.

In order to further encourage the growth of women entrepreneurship in India, there are several additional steps that can be taken. These include creating awareness and sensitization programs to change societal attitudes towards women entrepreneurs, providing greater access to funding and capital, and increasing the availability of training and development opportunities.

In spite of the challenges women entrepreneurs face in India, the government has taken steps to support their growth through various policies and schemes. These initiatives include financial assistance, skill development and training opportunities, and networking and mentorship programs. However, there is still much work to be done to encourage women to overcome obstacles and become successful entrepreneurs who can contribute to the growth of India's economy while achieving self-sufficiency.

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