



Economic And Social Adversities Of Rural Women Entrepreneurship – A Study

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ABSTRACT

Women by all means can be very effective agents of change for a better home; society and ultimately a better economy. It is prominently noticed in villages where the Women are traditionally ignored. In developing and developed countries, Women contribute significantly to economic development. According to a Report of United Nations, half of the total population belongs to Women and this half of the population produces half of the world's food supply, constitutes 60% of the working force, and the works for two-thirds of the world's working hours, but receives only 10% of the world's income and owns only 1% of the world's property.

Entrepreneurship by definition implies being in control of one's life and activities. It is precisely this independence that many societies have denied women. Entrepreneurship is not a male prerogative. It has been evidenced that women entrepreneurship has gain momentum in the last three decades with the increase in the number of women enterprises and their substantive involvement to the economic growth in the country. The reasons for growth of opportunities for women entrepreneurship are - the foreign Direct Investment Policy, technological advancements and manufactured exports in the Asia Pacific region.

Rural women entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in fostering economic growth and social development. However, women entrepreneurs in rural areas face significant economic and social adversities that hinder their progress. Economically, they grapple with limited access to capital, inadequate financial literacy, lack of market opportunities, and insufficient infrastructure. Additionally, restrictive land ownership laws and dependency on traditional, low-profit industries exacerbate these challenges. Socially, deep-rooted gender biases, cultural norms, and societal expectations create barriers to their participation and success in entrepreneurial ventures. The double burden of managing household responsibilities and business operations further intensifies their struggles. Moreover, the lack of mentorship, training programs, and supportive networks leaves them ill-equipped to compete in broader markets. Despite these challenges, rural women entrepreneurs display remarkable resilience, often contributing to community development, poverty alleviation, and sustainable growth. Addressing these adversities requires a multifaceted approach, including policy reforms, financial inclusion initiatives, skill development programs, and community awareness campaigns to dismantle discriminatory norms. Empowering rural women entrepreneurs is essential for unlocking their full potential and fostering inclusive economic progress.

This article explores the economic and social adversities faced by rural women entrepreneurs and emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions to promote their success and well-being. This study aims to find measures to overcome socio-economic challenges in order to strengthen women entrepreneurship in rural India.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Social and Economic Adversities, Social Support, Financial support, social culture, Self Help Groups.

1. INTRODUCTION

“The stage is set for social take-off for Women from low development path to an accelerated pace in achieving higher level of self-sustaining economic growth”- Vasath Desai.

The Indian society is still having the deep traces of traditional and cultural beliefs. Women in India since ages are confined to household activities; marriage is the only career for most of the Women. It is very rare that they enter profession like business and engineering but only prefer to confirm their activities to teaching, office work, nursing and baby care, medicine, etc. The growing awareness among Women in India about the profitability of entrepreneurship is seen only after the post-independent period. And the profile of Indian Women has undergone perceptible change. There is an increase in the composition of the Women working force in the service sector like Professional and Technical Schools & Colleges, Non-Agricultural Sectors. Commercialization and modernization of the economy was another reason to gradually eliminate many avenues of employment to Women in agriculture and industries and therefore it is necessary

Entrepreneurship development is recognized as a key element of small industry promotion imparting skills and strengthening the management capabilities of small entrepreneurs. Besides, small entrepreneurs by their very nature are not able to attract professionally qualified persons. Since 1950, a substantial volume of studies has gone into the different facts of entrepreneurial development in India to accelerate the process of industrialization. The studies showed that entrepreneurs are born and can also made –their skills sharpened, quality improved and generated in good number. It is possible to identify individuals in all communities, in rural and urban areas, among men and women with entrepreneurial talent to motivate and train them through properly organized programmes undertaking risk-bearing innovative activities for raising the growth rate in Agriculture, Industry as well as in the Service sector.

The following are the major steps undertaken by Government of India for the promotion and development of entrepreneurship:-

- Enactment of various Acts for the development of entrepreneurship,
- Entrepreneurial Development Programmes, and
- Setting up of Institutions in aid of entrepreneurs.

It is evident that Governments initiatives presented greater opportunities and encouragement to women entrepreneurs and focused on providing counseling and escort services, organizing training on entrepreneurial and managerial aspects, apart from general programs where women can participate; and encouraging women entrepreneurs' associations to play a greater proactive role in guiding and molding prospective and existing women entrepreneurs.

In India the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of India (in the Preamble of fundamental rights) whereby the constitution upholds and grants the equality to women. The National commission for women, which was set up in 1990 through an Act of Parliament to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women, is considered to be the apex body to ensure rights and work towards the women empowerment. The successive five years plans have made efforts towards making women economically strong. However, in social hierarchy, women, mostly in the areas continue to remain in a lower strata compared to the men. The efforts over the decades have also been changing steadily over the years—from social, economic empowerment to political empowerment. The 73rd and 74th Amendments of constitution of India in 1993 are landmarks to ensure political empowerment of women.

Despite of all the efforts of the government, empowerment of women has made little differences in the lives of rural women in terms of decision-making of assets and even in household matters. The movement towards empowerment of women needs to be accelerated. Empowerment of women will ensure better justice, better living and a stable society. Surveys have found that literacy rate of Women is very low in India. Due to lack of education, many women are unaware of the latest technological developments and market trends. This creates further problems in the setting up and running of business enterprises. Studies have revealed that uneducated Women do not have the knowledge of measurement as well as basic accounting. They have their own system of accounting which may be sufficient to run a petty business, but certainly not a business enterprise.

Rural women entrepreneurs in India are emerging as a powerful force for change, transforming not only their lives but also their communities. Often from marginalised sections of society, face significant challenges—social, economic, and cultural—but are steadily overcoming these hurdles to establish successful micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). India is home to over 20% of MSMEs owned by women, a large portion of which are based in rural areas. The exact number stands at approximately 8.05 million women-owned MSMEs. These enterprises contribute to employment generation, particularly for other women, and play a pivotal role in local economies by offering products and services tailored to the needs of rural markets. Between 2019 and 2022, the number of women-owned MSMEs has grown at an annual rate of approximately 18-20%, which is promising, but there's still much ground to cover. As more rural women break into entrepreneurship, it becomes clear that supporting their ventures could help unlock enormous economic potential and positive societal change.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A 2024 study published in the *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship* found that microfinance and entrepreneurial activities within Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have positively influenced women's social, economic, and psychological empowerment. This includes increased financial independence, decision-making participation, and self-confidence.

A report (2023) by NASSCOM Foundation and LEAD at Krea University revealed that 80% of rural women entrepreneurs have utilized social commerce platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook to market their products, despite facing digital literacy challenges. The study emphasizes the need for digital upskilling and improved access to financial resources.

A 2024 survey by Haqdarshak and DBS Bank India indicated that 90% of rural women entrepreneurs consistently save a portion of their monthly income. However, 89% prefer in-person banking, highlighting a reliance on traditional methods despite the availability of digital services. Only 38% use digital banking for business, primarily through UPI.

P. JayaKumar and J. Kannan (2021) highlighted the challenges and opportunities before women for self employment. Main challenges faced by the women are dual role of women overlapping of responsibilities of business and family, illiteracy among rural women, less risk bearing capacity, lack of information and assistance, need of training and development etc. with the increasing interest of government in women entrepreneurship created it as an opportunity for women.

Ajith Kumar N & Others (2021) explained that, "the present entrepreneurship development programmes to empower Women have certain lacunas, which are to be modified in such a way that they work not only on paper but bring the desired changes within the target period". There is a myth in the Women's income is used for certain extras, non-essential expenditures. Society at large is prejudiced against Women. It is also observed that very often, Women also tend to downgrade the intellectual and professional achievements of other Women.

Priyanaka Sharma (2013) highlighted the development ways for women entrepreneurship. These are providing better educational facilities, adequate training programs, vocational training, and establishing special target groups for women entrepreneurs etc. This study also highlighted the problems faced by women entrepreneurs. These are male dominating society, inadequate financial assistance, women family obligations etc.

B. Sobha Rani & D. Koteswara Rao(2018) observed the proposition, accelerating the women entrepreneurship, is essential for broad-basing entrepreneurship in various sectors of the economy. For facilitating this, it is important to understand the prerequisites and guidelines for developing entrepreneurial qualities among women. Strategies are to be formulated for the future, and for supporting women entrepreneurship in a sustained manner.

A Sankaran (2017) reviewed the trend of women and entrepreneurial activities. He remarks that Women continue to be discriminated, exploited and exposed to inequalities. This is very real in business circle and in universal and rural entrepreneurship in particular. Rural entrepreneurial activities based on education, training facilities, capacity building and management skills (with stipend) are to be provided.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Need for the Study

Review of literature shows the importance of rural women entrepreneurship in India is quite high and highlights the efforts to be made to promote the real growth of Women entrepreneurship. Central and State Government Agencies are springing up to promote Women entrepreneurs by identifying the individuals from all communities and regions through organized programmes and thereby are assisting in setting –up of enterprises. There are good numbers of financial institutions that support Women to start any new enterprise. Some of them are Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), National Agricultural Bank For Rural Development (NABARD), Small Industries Development Bank Of India(SIDBI), Council For Advancement Of People's Action And Rural Technology(CAPART) ,Access to credit through "Development Bank for Women entrepreneurs" in Small Scale and Tiny Sectors, Reserve Bank of India(RBI).

Gender equality and empowerment of women is recognized as the key element to achieve progress in all areas. Social and economic progresses are the main requirements of women empowerment. Entrepreneurship is one of the instruments to attain these objectives. The policies and the Government initiatives expect women to be vigilant in pressing their own demands and have a separate identity. It is observed that, mainstreaming and women's empowerment is central to human development. But Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This can be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings. At this point of discussion there is a need for study focusing to addressing of social and economic challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs become important. The present study economic and social adversities of rural women entrepreneurship – A study in Udupi district can help to understand adversities and offer measures to overcome challenges.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:-

1. To study the concept of entrepreneurship in general and Women Entrepreneurship in particular.
2. To study the profile of Women entrepreneurs in Udupi District
3. To explore the difficulties of women entrepreneurs in rural India.
4. To suggest measures for uplifting the status of rural women entrepreneurs.
5. To suggest measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of Women entrepreneurs through careful analysis of the present scenario

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Sources

The study is basically empirical in nature relying heavily on Primary Data. The primary data has been collected through the "questionnaire method". This will add to the knowledge base and provide more information about the specific group of women entrepreneurs in Mangalore Taluk. The study makes use of secondary data in its analysis. However, a large part of the analysis is exclusively based on the Primary data. The empirical study covers the observations of the researcher and the experiences of the respondents. The researcher, for the collection of the primary data selected total of 60 Women entrepreneurs from manufacturing, trading and service industries from the study area, 50 from Mangalore and 10 from Moodbidri. To achieve the objectives of the present investigation, two sets of samples were drawn, one set of respondents was from Women entrepreneurs and another set of Respondents from promotional Government Agencies and Institutions.

For the study, the sample of sixty women entrepreneurs are taken who are situated in and around Dakshina Kannada District but concentrating more on Mangalore taluk. While selecting the sample units, proportionate representation has been given to registered and also home based industries functioning as micro and small enterprises. As the number of enterprises functioning successfully and solely by women is quite small, random sampling method is used to collect the data.

Sample Design

This investigation was limited to women entrepreneurs in Mangalore Taluk in Dakshina Kannada (D.K.) District who are engaged in Micro & Small business enterprises, and not professionals and also home-based Entrepreneurs. This study has not included Self Help Group members who are carrying business activities at home. Even this study has not included home- based business through on line. Large scale Industries are also excluded from the study.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

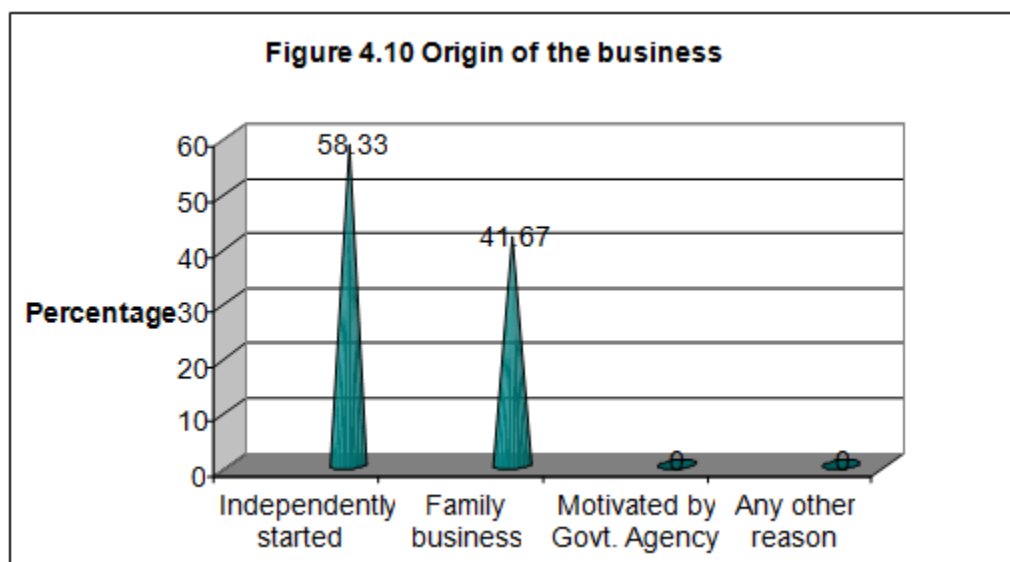
Table 1. Area covered by the business of women entrepreneurs

Area of business	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Local	10	16.67
District	20	33.33
Outside District	10	16.67
Within The State	10	16.67
Outside Karnataka	6	10.00
Outside India	4	6.67

The starting of any business owes its origin to its ancestral background, inspiration and motivation from others also. It is seen from the study that most of the business are started independently without any family business background. The following table illustrates how a business has been started by the women entrepreneur.

Table 2. How Women entrepreneurs started entrepreneurship (basis of origin of entrepreneurship)

Basis for the origin	No. of respondents	Percentage
Independently started	35	58.33
Family business	25	41.67
Motivated by Govt. Agency	0	0
Any other reason	0	0
Total	60	100.00



A glance at the above table shows that 58.33% of the sample units are independently started by the entrepreneurs and 41.67 % of them are managed as family business. But none of the sample units are started by the motivation of Government Agencies or for any other reason. This leads too the conclusion that the small businesses by women are not at all started because of the government support or from the initiation of any Government or private Agencies or

Table 3. Initial Capital employed in the business

Initial Capital (in Rs.)	No. of respondents	Percentage
Less than 50,000	10	16.67
50,001-1,00,000	10	16.67
1,00,001-5,00,000	20	33.33
5,00,001 -10,00,000	15	25
10,00,000 or above	5	8.33
Total	60	100

From the above table it is inferred that majority of entrepreneurs employed capital less than Rs. 10,000, 5(12.5%) respondents employed capital group of 10,000-20,000, 2(5%) respondents employed capital group of 50,001-10,0000, and none of respondents employed capital group of 20001-50000 and one lakh or above.

Table 4. Motive to continue in entrepreneurship

Reason	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
To Earn Profit	30	50
Public Status	18	30
Future Prospects	9	15
Government Incentives	3	5
Total	60	100

Out of respondents, 30 entrepreneurs forming 50% of the total respondents feel that the important motivating factor behind their continuing of the business is to earn profit. The remaining 30% of them feel that preferably the earning of public status motivates them to work. The remaining 15% of them opine that future prospect is a motivating factor but only 3 of the sample units ,i.e., 5% are encouraged or motivated to continue their entrepreneurship for the sake of government incentives. This leads to the conclusion that the women entrepreneurs are functioning with the individual motives and are functioning independently and nobody is more interested about the government incentives and subsidies

5. MAJOR FINDINGS

The women entrepreneurs in this sample district are educated and majority of them have got trained. 80% of them are running their businesses in industrial areas and also in market areas. Only a few undertake their business at home functioning as home-based units. Despite these factors, the enterprises have not made the desirable development over the decade.

Most of the women enterprises are usually started either independently or as a family business but no one established them through motivation by the government agencies, Thus the services of DICs are not extended to all and also not utilized properly.

Nearly 60% of the business units are proprietary undertakings and 35% functioning as partnership firms where the family members and close relatives are the partners. Only 8% of them are continuing their family business under H.U.F. units. As nobody is functioning as private company or co-operative unit, they cannot enjoy the benefits of large scale operations.

Most of the women entrepreneurs belong to the age group of 25 to 35 years and many of them are graduates or pre-degree holders but not with a post graduate qualification which may offer proven expertise. Further, 60% of them have experience in present business of less than 10 years whereas 40% of them have more than 10 years experience in the business field.

More than 75% of them undertake manufacturing and trading type of business and use machineries to run the business and only 15% of them still function without machineries. But they have not added much to the asset creation. They are just maintaining their initial assets because of the reason that their earning capacity is less and assistance provided by the government is negligible.

The study reveals that over half of the women entrepreneurs considered their business as part-time and spend 5-8 hours in their business ventures and they are happy with their working hours. They agree with the situation that being a women Entrepreneur, their business engagements interfere with the personal life because, the dual role to be played by them is the major social constraint faced by almost all of them.

Majority of the women entrepreneurs invested their own fund to start the business as well as for its expansion later and more than 67% of the respondents started their career with initial capital investment of less than Rs. 5,00,000. This shows that these businesses are small businesses and they have not developed into medium or large enterprises. Such low investment in SSI is responsible for creating other problems such as capturing a new market, increase in sales force, advertisement, branding, standardization, etc.

Nearly 50% of the respondents sell their products through retail shops and others sell directly to clients or personally sell them. But they face much problems in marketing the products because of the problem of finance, unremunerative prices, government restrictions, etc.

6. SUGGESTIONS

1. In order to achieve the desired goal of entrepreneurial promotion, there should be re-orientation of educational system for women; general training as well as technical training, career guidance, and timely assistance are required.
2. Women need to increase their self-confidence and optimism. Education plays a vital role here. The educational curriculum and training program for women entrepreneurs should address a variety of topics related to the business.
3. Women entrepreneurs should be acquainted with issues like bank loans, interests, Govt. assistance, etc. Information regarding new technologies is very necessary. The NGOs can act as facilitator in this regard.
4. Where women entrepreneurs are hesitant to attend training programme measures can be taken to use incentives and arrangements need to be made to give them necessary training in their work place itself.
5. Greater co-ordination between home-based business entrepreneurs and distributors is strongly recommended for promotion of rural entrepreneurship.
6. Data base relating to women entrepreneurs is not adequately available. The maintenance of demographic records on women entrepreneurs serve purpose of appropriate policies of governing bodies.
7. Improving the basic infrastructure necessary for the growth and development of women entrepreneurship. Help desk at convenient location is suggested for the promotion of women entrepreneurs.
8. Setting up Women Entrepreneurial Cells at Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Jilla Panchayats, Schools and Colleges can help women entrepreneurs to update with latest information.
9. NGOs should come forward to study problems and issues governing women entrepreneurship and initiate projects that help the women entrepreneurs.
10. Seeking various approaches to overcome the legitimacy barriers involved in Women entrepreneurship by the budding entrepreneurs of emerging industries. There should be social support for women. Women entrepreneurs should be respected and appreciated for the informal role they play in the development of the economy.

7. CONCLUSION

The major issue of 'Development of Women entrepreneurship' should be planned properly by creating the system where there is perfect blend of State initiated programmes and support and less interference of the government in certain issues and also managing the socially and politically active people of the regions. A strong, dynamic and efficient SME sector will ensure the sustainable economic development. Thus, encouragement and promotion of competitive and innovative women SMEs is necessary in contributing to greater economic growth of the region as well as the country.

There is lack of entrepreneurial spirit and managerial skills among the women youth. These problems are compounded with the lack of information, compliance to standards and certification and turbulent business environment. Unlike large enterprises, SMEs are more agile and adaptable to changes in the business environment. Concerted efforts, actions and development programmes will certainly enhance the capacity of

women entrepreneurs and will ensure a more progressive SME sector towards the overall economic growth of the region as well as the whole country. A better understanding of the influencing cultural norms and values coupled with a change in the traditional normative beliefs embedded in the society, are essential to increase the level of women entrepreneurial activities. Such new perspectives would prove extremely helpful and applicable in countries where normative support for women entrepreneurial activity was not found.

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