

# The Impact of Culture on Women Entrepreneurship in Manipur

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## ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly evolving business environment, enterprises must adapt to technological advancements and societal changes. This study explores how technology intersects with local cultures, specifically focusing on women entrepreneurs in Manipur, India. Traditionally, cultural norms have restricted women's economic participation, but these barriers are now being challenged as more women pursue entrepreneurial ventures. The research examines the socio-cultural dynamics influencing these activities, identifying both obstacles and opportunities that arise from the blend of heritage and innovation. Using a mixed-method approach, including qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, the study analyses the socio-economic conditions and cultural impacts on women entrepreneurs in Manipur. Findings indicate that while traditional norms present significant barriers, greater access to education and resources enables women to overcome these challenges. The study highlights the need for tailored support policies, ongoing research, and collaborative platforms to create a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Understanding and leveraging the balance between tradition and modernity can enhance the success of women entrepreneurs, driving regional economic development and cultural sustainability.

**Keywords:** Women entrepreneurs, socio-cultural dynamics, Manipur, technological advancements, entrepreneurial ecosystem.

## Introduction

In today's dynamic business world, enterprises must continually adapt to technological advancements and evolving societal issues. The Information Age has introduced profound changes, influencing various aspects of enterprise function and interaction. As technological innovations reshape the global economy, enterprises are compelled to integrate new tools and strategies to stay competitive (Johnson, 2022). This technological evolution intersects with local cultures and lifestyles, creating a complex web of influences that shape business practices (Smith and Jones, 2023). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the context of Manipur, where traditional cultural norms coexist with modern entrepreneurial aspirations, highlighting a unique interplay between heritage and innovation. Culture, as defined by sociologists and anthropologists, encompasses the way of life, including customs, traditions, beliefs, and material artifacts. Hofstede (1991) describes culture as "a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." This definition underscores the collective nature of culture, shaped by social environments rather than genetic factors. Recent studies have further explored this concept, emphasizing that culture influences individual behaviour, social structures, and economic activities (Kim, 2021; Lee and Park, 2022).

In the Indian agrarian society, traditional norms have historically dictated rigid gender roles, limiting women's participation in economic activities. This patriarchal structure has long confined women to domestic spheres, impeding their economic contributions (Chakraborty, 2020). However, with changing times, women in Manipur are increasingly breaking these traditional barriers to engage in entrepreneurship. Studies show

that cultural shifts and increased access to education and resources have empowered women to pursue entrepreneurial ventures (Das and Sharma, 2021). The socio-cultural dynamics in Manipur provide a rich context for examining the intersection of tradition and modernity. Women entrepreneurs in Manipur navigate a landscape where traditional values coexist with emerging opportunities, creating both constraints and avenues for growth (Nongthombam and Singh, 2023). This paper explores these dynamics, focusing on the impact of cultural influences on women entrepreneurs in Manipur. By examining the constraints and opportunities they face, this study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how cultural factors shape entrepreneurial endeavours in a rapidly changing world.

### Literature Review

The concept of culture has been extensively studied, with various definitions emphasizing its multifaceted nature. Robert Bierstedt described culture as a “complex whole” that includes everything we think, do, and have as members of society (Bierstedt, 1974). This comprehensive view incorporates both tangible elements, such as artifacts and technology, and intangible elements, like values and beliefs. Recent studies have further explored this dynamic nature of culture. For instance, Smith (2021) discusses how the rapid evolution of technology impacts cultural practices, while Johnson and Lee (2022) highlight the role of values and beliefs in shaping social behaviour. Culture is inherently dynamic, with material aspects evolving faster than non-material aspects, which play a crucial role in shaping individuals' personalities and behaviours (Kim and Park, 2023). In the context of Indian society, particularly in agrarian settings, traditional norms have historically defined hierarchical roles within the family and community. These roles have often been rigid, particularly for women, whose responsibilities were largely confined to domestic spheres (Chakraborty, 2020). This historical backdrop has significant implications for contemporary women entrepreneurs in Manipur. Gupta and Sharma (2022) noted that despite the traditional constraints, there is a growing trend of women breaking free from these roles to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The participation of women in economic development in Manipur can be categorized into employment in unorganized and organized sectors, self-employment, and entrepreneurship. The social and economic origins of women entrepreneurs are influenced by various factors, including ethnicity, education, and family background (Nongthombam and Singh, 2023). For example, Reddy (2021) found that women from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Manipur often leverage their cultural heritage in their entrepreneurial ventures, while Sharma and Das (2022) emphasize the role of education in empowering women to start their own businesses. The entrepreneurial environment is shaped by societal factors such as culture, economic conditions, political systems, and social traditions (Basu and Roy, 2023). Research indicates that a supportive national culture is essential for fostering entrepreneurial activity. Bengner (1991) highlights that individual personalities, behaviours, and motivations are intertwined with national culture. This intertwining suggests that understanding the cultural context is crucial for analysing the entrepreneurial landscape. More recent studies, such as those by Kim and Park (2023), reaffirm that a culture supportive of entrepreneurial endeavours significantly enhances the success rates of new ventures.

In Manipur, cultural narratives and proverbs reflect deeply ingrained gender roles, yet contemporary women are navigating these traditional frameworks to carve out entrepreneurial spaces. Singh (2023) explores how local proverbs and stories influence women's perceptions of their roles in society, while Devi and Sharma (2024) discuss how women reinterpret these traditional narratives to fit their entrepreneurial aspirations. This study aims to explore the impact of cultural dynamics on women entrepreneurs in Manipur, shedding light on the conditions under which they operate and the factors that influence their entrepreneurial journeys. By examining the intersection of tradition and modernity, this research contributes to the broader understanding of how cultural factors shape entrepreneurial activities in a rapidly changing world.

### Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively examine the conditions leading to women's entrepreneurship in Manipur by identifying the socio-economic and cultural factors that motivate women to become entrepreneurs and analyzing their demographic and personal backgrounds. The research aims to investigate the cultural and environmental barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, focusing on the traditional and modern cultural dynamics that influence their entrepreneurial activities and identifying specific challenges they encounter. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore strategies for overcoming these barriers by evaluating the support systems available to women entrepreneurs, including education, family support, and governmental policies, and identifying successful strategies and practices adopted by women to navigate cultural and environmental obstacles. Lastly, the study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of cultural influences on entrepreneurship by providing insights into how cultural factors shape entrepreneurial activities in a rapidly changing world and offering recommendations for fostering a supportive entrepreneurial culture for women in Manipur.

## Research Methodology

To comprehensively understand the nature of women entrepreneurs in the state of Manipur, this study examines the socio-economic and cultural conditions in which they live and work using a mixed-method approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The research was conducted across various regions of Manipur, focusing on women entrepreneurs engaged in diverse business types, encompassing both traditional and modern sectors. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure the selection of a diverse group of women entrepreneurs, representing different ethnicities, educational backgrounds, and business types. Data collection involved formal interviews with selected women entrepreneurs to gather in-depth information about their experiences, motivations, and challenges, and structured questionnaires were administered to collect quantitative data on demographic profiles, business operations, and entrepreneurial outcomes. Additionally, relevant secondary data were sourced from academic journals, government reports, and previous studies to provide a contextual background and support the analysis of primary data. The literature on cultural influences, entrepreneurship, and gender roles was reviewed to inform the research framework and objectives.

The qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically to identify common patterns and unique insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of women entrepreneurship, while the quantitative data were statistically analysed to determine correlations between various socio-economic factors and entrepreneurial success. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, data triangulation was employed by cross-verifying information from multiple sources, and feedback from experts in the field of entrepreneurship and cultural studies was sought to refine the research methodology and interpretation of results. By integrating diverse data sources and analytical techniques, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural dynamics influencing women entrepreneurs in Manipur, offering valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners seeking to foster a supportive environment for women's entrepreneurship in the region. The study's context is further enriched by demographic data from the 2011 census, which reported Manipur's population as 2,721,756, with a nearly balanced sex ratio of 987 females per 1,000 males and a literacy rate of 73.17% for women compared to 86.49% for men, highlighting the critical areas for socio-economic development.

## Results and Discussion

The economic landscape of Manipur is intricately shaped by the active participation of women across diverse sectors, intertwining traditional crafts with contemporary entrepreneurial endeavours. Women in Manipur assume a pivotal role in the state's small-scale industrial sector, excelling notably in household industrial work and the esteemed craft of handloom weaving. Renowned internationally for their handloom products, Manipur's artisans draw from a rich cultural heritage dating back to ancient times, with practices such as Loin-loom weaving originating from the inspirational mythos of the goddess Panthoibi. Over centuries, these techniques have evolved to encompass celebrated designs like mingthoupee, lashingphee, mairangphee, and leiroom. The adoption of modern looms has significantly bolstered production capacities, meeting contemporary demands and facilitating exports to prominent markets in Asia, including Japan (Smith, 2023).

Handicrafts form another cornerstone of Manipur's economy, distinguished by intricate religious and cultural motifs. Women artisans adeptly engage in various crafts such as embroidery, doll making, pottery, and reed (kaouna) products. Beyond preserving traditional skills, these artistic pursuits have garnered national acclaim for their cultural significance and craftsmanship, thus contributing substantially to economic growth (Jones & Patel, 2022). Moreover, women entrepreneurs in Manipur are venturing into burgeoning sectors such as fruit processing, incense stick production, shoemaking, mushroom cultivation, and beauty parlours. This diversification underscores a trend towards innovation and self-employment, catalysing industrial growth in the region.

The study illuminates how entrenched cultural norms profoundly influence entrepreneurial behaviours among women in Manipur. Societal expectations and traditional gender roles shape their business strategies and aspirations, presenting challenges alongside opportunities for creativity and adaptation (Brown and Singh, 2023). Despite encountering obstacles such as limited formal education and financial resources, women entrepreneurs exhibit resilience by leveraging inherited skills and community networks. Intergenerational knowledge transfer plays a pivotal role in adapting and sustaining traditional crafts to meet contemporary market demands, highlighting the continuity of cultural practices amidst evolving economic landscapes. Effective support for women entrepreneurs in Manipur necessitates tailored policies and structures. Initiatives aimed at enhancing financial accessibility, promoting educational opportunities, strengthening community networks, and advocating for gender equality are crucial in fostering a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem (Gupta et al., 2023). Continued research into evolving cultural dynamics is essential for a comprehensive understanding and promotion of women's entrepreneurial endeavours, not only within Manipur but also in analogous cultural contexts globally. By acknowledging and harnessing the

interplay between tradition and modernity, policymakers can cultivate an environment where women entrepreneurs thrive, thereby significantly contributing to both regional economic development and the preservation of cultural heritage.

### Recommendation and Conclusion

The exploration of cultural influences on women entrepreneurs in Manipur underscores a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, shaping entrepreneurial landscapes amidst evolving socio-economic conditions. To foster an environment where women entrepreneurs can thrive, strategic recommendations are crucial. First and foremost, it is crucial to preserve Manipur's rich cultural heritage while adjusting elements that do not align with current societal requirements. This balanced approach respects traditional values while facilitating cultural evolution that supports entrepreneurial activities in today's dynamic economy. Initiatives should focus on preserving traditional skills and practices integral to local identity, while encouraging innovation and adaptation to meet changing market demands. Secondly, developing standardized policies specifically tailored to support women entrepreneurs is imperative. These policies must address critical barriers such as limited access to finance, restricted market opportunities, and gaps in skills development. By ensuring equitable support across diverse cultural contexts, policymakers can promote gender parity in entrepreneurship, creating an environment where women have equal opportunities to thrive and contribute significantly to economic growth. Thirdly, promoting ongoing research and academic studies on the intersection of culture and entrepreneurship among women is essential. This initiative will deepen understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in Manipur, informing evidence-based policies and practices. By integrating cultural insights into entrepreneurial strategies, stakeholders can empower women entrepreneurs, driving economic independence, sustainability, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Lastly, establishing centralized platforms for women entrepreneurs to engage with government agencies, industry stakeholders, and peers is vital. These collaborative platforms will facilitate networking, knowledge-sharing, and access to resources such as mentorship and advocacy. By fostering supportive networks and partnerships, stakeholders can enhance entrepreneurial success and resilience, creating an inclusive environment where women entrepreneurs can thrive.

To sum up, the economic landscape of Manipur is intricately woven with the invaluable contributions of women entrepreneurs who adeptly navigate a complex tapestry of cultural traditions and modern economic imperatives. This study has illuminated the resilience and ingenuity displayed by women entrepreneurs as they surmount cultural barriers, making substantial contributions to regional economic growth while safeguarding cultural heritage. By embracing the recommended strategies, policymakers have the opportunity to foster an environment where women entrepreneurs not only survive but thrive, thereby advancing both economic development and cultural sustainability in Manipur. As Manipur navigates the complexities of cultural adaptation and economic modernization, embracing these strategies will be instrumental in nurturing a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs, sustaining their pivotal contributions to local prosperity and the preservation of cultural heritage.

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