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Research Article

Innovate, Empower, Transform: The Rise of Women in Entrepreneurship

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Abstract. This study examines the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) as a critical metric for assessing women's progress across various domains, including education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. By analyzing global and local perspectives, the research identifies key factors that contribute to the rise of the WEI, while acknowledging the diverse challenges women face in different contexts. The study was conducted 2024-2025. The study explores the impact of various interventions, including government policies, NGO initiatives, and grassroots efforts, on enhancing women's agency and decision-making power. Furthermore, it investigates the role of entrepreneurship as a driving force for women's empowerment, analyzing the factors that facilitate women's entrepreneurial success, such as access to finance, mentorship, and market opportunities. The research underscores the need for tailored support mechanisms and inclusive ecosystems to foster women's entrepreneurship and contribute to economic growth. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the urgency of prioritizing women's empowerment as a fundamental goal for social and economic development, highlighting the need for collaboration among policymakers, businesses, and communities to create an enabling environment that fosters gender equality, innovation and sustainable development.

Keywords: Women Empowerment Index, Gender equality, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive environment, Gender-responsive policies

INTRODUCTION

Women represent an untapped reservoir of talent within the business world. The concept of women's empowerment encompasses various dimensions, including acknowledging women's perspectives, actively seeking their input, and elevating their status through education, awareness, literacy, and training (Mosedale and Sarah, 2005). In the realm of development and economics, discussions around women's empowerment have gained prominence. Economic empowerment enables women to control resources, assets, and income. It also enhances their ability to manage risk and improve overall well-being. Implementing gender-sensitive approaches can address historical inequalities and support marginalized groups in specific social and political contexts (Baden et al., 1997). Traditionally, entrepreneurship has been male-dominated. However, the landscape has evolved, and today's women are making remarkable strides as inspirational entrepreneurs (Vinesh, 2014). Das (2001) notes that women increasingly turn to entrepreneurship as a way to overcome the "glass ceiling" that often hinders their ascent to top managerial positions within organizations. Women are now actively engaged both financially and operationally in business ventures (Singh, 2012). The United States has witnessed a steady rise in female entrepreneurship throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The number of female-owned businesses has grown by approximately 5% since 1997. Notable self-made female entrepreneurs, including Coco Chanel, Diane Hendricks, Meg Whitman, and Oprah Winfrey, exemplify this trend. Women's entrepreneurship is a dynamic interplay of socio-economic, cultural, historical, and institutional factors. Understanding these complexities is essential for promoting inclusive and thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Figure 1: Factors of Women Empowerment across various sectors

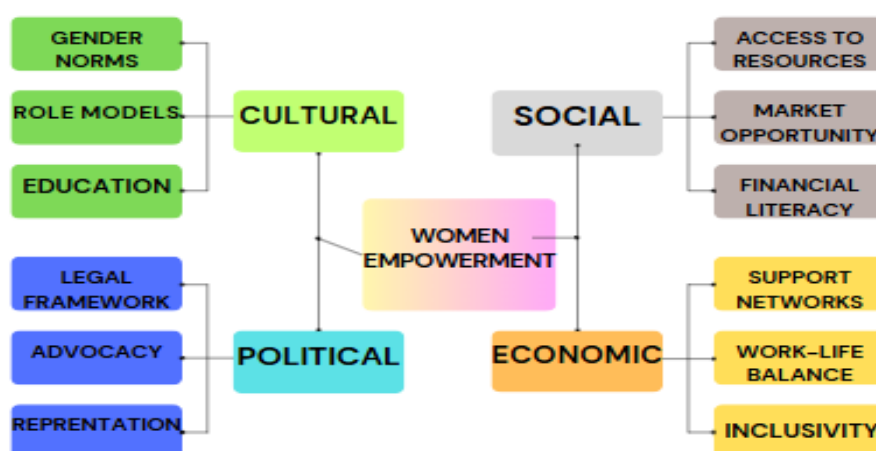


Figure 1 highlight the key roles and factors that either contribute or hinder women growth and empowerment through entrepreneurship

Objectives of the study

1. Assess the current status and challenges of women's entrepreneurship globally.
2. Develop and apply a comprehensive framework for measuring women's empowerment across countries.
3. Investigate the role of entrepreneurship in driving women's empowerment and generate actionable recommendations.

METHODS

The research employs a mixed-methods approach. The study commenced with a comprehensive literature review, drawing upon academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. Keywords such as "Women empowerment," "entrepreneurship," and "Gender Equality" were used to identify relevant sources (Bryman, 2016). The selected sources were analyzed to extract relevant themes, arguments, and findings (Booth et al., 2016), and critically evaluated to form a balanced view of strategy, innovation, and their legal and ethical implications (Hart, 1998).

To gather data on people's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors towards sustainable practices and innovations, a structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 180 respondents from Kashmir, India. This questionnaire included a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The collected data was then analyzed using statistical tools and software, which may involve trend analysis, regression analysis, or predictive modeling, to identify patterns, relationships, and trends. This mixed-methods approach, combining literature review with primary data collection through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 180 respondents from Kashmir, India, provides a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, allowing for both in-depth analysis of existing knowledge and empirical insights into people's perceptions and behaviors.

SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Research has shown that the demand for skilled women entrepreneurs surpasses the available supply. Contrary to conventional wisdom, many women possess the necessary skills to build high-growth businesses but are not financed through growth capital (Brush & Candida G, 2014). Additionally, women entrepreneurs have different social networks compared to their male counterparts, with less overlap in financial networks (Brush et al., 2018). This disparity affects their access to private equity funding. Furthermore, studies have explored the role of social capital in venture capital funding. An entrepreneur's social network significantly influences their chances of receiving private equity funding. Unfortunately, women continue to face disadvantages in this regard. Even when women possess strong human capital, they are still less likely to pursue their high-growth business ideas full-time (Scott et al., 2017). Empowering women has far-reaching effects. When women

have equal access to resources, education, and opportunities, economies thrive. Their participation in the workforce contributes significantly to economic growth. Empowered women are more likely to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. When women control income and resources, poverty rates decrease. Moreover, their investment in family health, education, and well-being positively impacts society. Finally, women's participation in business leadership ensures diverse perspectives, leading to better organizational performance.

CULTURAL CHANGE AND GENDER EGALITARIAN ATTITUDES

Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping diversity, and it serves as a conduit for ensuring equal opportunities for women (Schalkwyk and Johanna June 2000). However, cultural factors have often had a limited impact on women's entrepreneurship (Shahvand et al., 2021). Women's empowerment disrupts traditional barriers that have confined women to predefined roles. As women gain access to education, economic opportunities, and decision-making power, societal norms undergo a profound shift. By challenging the status quo, empowered women inspire others and create a ripple effect. Their achievements become beacons of possibility for future generations. Patriarchal norms have perpetuated gender inequality for centuries. Yet, women's empowerment asserts their rights and agency. When women actively participate in public life—as entrepreneurs, leaders, or professionals—they redefine societal expectations. Their presence reshapes cultural narratives, paving the way for progress. Despite progress, challenges persist. Women often have fewer personal financial assets than men, necessitating additional resources to seize opportunities. The question of whether women face greater difficulty securing finance for the same business opportunity has become a distinct field of study (Carter et al., 2001). Gender disparities persist, especially in venture capital. While senior venture capitalists are predominantly men, positive shifts are occurring. A study by Babson College revealed an upward trend: from less than 5% of venture capital investments in companies with women executives in 1999 to 18% in 2013 (Weisul and Kimberly, 2015). Women's empowerment—across personal, legal, socioeconomic, and political dimensions—has democratized not only the nuclear family but also broader society. It's a transformative force with far-reaching implications.

HISTORICAL LEGACIES

In 1739, Eliza Lucas Pinckney took over her family's South Carolina plantations at the age of 16, marking one of the earliest recorded instances of female-owned businesses in the United States. During the 18th and 19th centuries, women operated small businesses—sometimes inherited or born out of necessity—to supplement income or avoid poverty. However, these ventures were not initially recognized as entrepreneurial endeavors. Black women faced additional challenges, particularly in the Jim Crow South, where racial discrimination, limited access to capital, and inadequate networks hindered their entrepreneurial aspirations (Walker's Legacy, 2016). Despite societal disapproval, women like Margaret Hardenbrook Philipse and Rebecca Lukens succeeded (Bostwick, Heleigh and 2017). Lukens transformed the

Brandywine Iron Works & Nail Factory into a profitable steel business (Much and Marilyn, 2018). World War II brought significant changes. Women entered the workforce, taking on jobs left vacant by men serving in the military. Some women, like Pauline Trigere and Estée Lauder, started their own businesses during this time. As the war ended, women continued contributing to the business world. Martha Stewart and Vera Bradley emerged as successful entrepreneurs, reshaping public perception and emphasizing the valuable role female entrepreneurs played in the economy. Policy changes followed. The Women's Business Ownership Act (1988) addressed discrimination in lending and allowed women-owned businesses to compete for government contracts. Since 2000, there has been an increase in small and big ventures by women, including one of their biggest obstacles—financing. Vartika Manasvi is among those who chose Canada over the US. According to her, "there's no longevity there." (Bhattacharya and Ananya, 2019) Despite progress, financing remains a challenge for women entrepreneurs.

INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN FACTORS

Institutional design factors significantly influence women's empowerment through entrepreneurship. Informal and formal institutions play distinct roles. Informal support, such as social legitimacy, boosts women's self-efficacy. When women perceive their ventures as socially valued, they are more likely to take risks and succeed. Formal support, including policies and regulations, indirectly shapes the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Access to funding, legal protections, and resources depends on institutional frameworks. Lastly, normative, cognitive, and regulative logics condition empowerment. Challenging restrictive norms, fostering confidence, and advocating for gender-inclusive policies collectively empower women entrepreneurs.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a sociological framework that examines how an individual's social and political identities intersect, resulting in unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. These identities can include factors like gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability. The concept recognizes that these intersecting identities can both empower and oppress individuals (Holley et al., 2016). While there is limited quantitative research on intersectionality's practical applications (Bauer et al., 2021), it remains a crucial lens for understanding social inequalities. Crenshaw, a prominent scholar, introduced the idea that categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct (Thomas et al., 2004). Three aspects of intersectionality impact non-white women: structural intersectionality (unique experiences of domestic violence), political intersectionality (laws affecting visibility of violence against non-white women), and representational intersectionality (how media portrayals can obscure authentic experiences) (Crenshaw and Kimberle, 1991). In the labor market, intersectionality affects wages, discrimination, and domestic labor. Despite accounting for education and experience, significant differences persist (Browne et al., 2003). Privilege related to race, gender, and socio-economic status influences

hiring, wages, and exposure to stereotypes (2003). Understanding intersectionality sheds light on economic inequalities and the multidimensional impact of race and gender on social status

MEASURING WOMENS EMPOWERMENT

Review and limitations

Women's empowerment can be assessed using various measures that capture both political and economic participation. One such measure is the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which considers factors like women's representation in parliament, managerial positions, and income disparity (Deneulin et al., 2000). However, GEM has been criticized for overlooking societal and contextual aspects, such as cultural norms and violations of women's rights (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003). Another valuable framework is Longwe's Women Empowerment Framework (WEF), endorsed by the United Nations. The WEF comprises five dimensions: welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control. It aids policymakers in evaluating and enhancing women's empowerment (Sham et al., 2021). Additionally, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) offer insights into gender equality. While the GDI measures absolute levels of income, education, and health, it doesn't directly address gender inequality (Deneulin et al., 2009). A qualitative approach involves identifying constraints to women's agency, revealing power dynamics and facilitating discussions on gender discrimination. Evaluating actions taken by women themselves—rather than external groups—provides a more accurate assessment of empowerment (Mosedale & Sarah, 2005).

EMPOWERMENT ACROSS COUNTRIES

According to Cornelius and Pankaj 2022, In more gender-equal countries, the participation of both men and women in total early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) tends to be higher. Thus, women from low to middle income countries (such as Russia and the Philippines) are more likely to enter early-stage entrepreneurship when compared to those of higher-income countries (such as Belgium, Sweden, and Australia). A significant factor that may play a role in this disparity can be attributed to the fact that women from low-income countries often seek additional means of income to support themselves and their families. Overall, 40 to 50 per cent of all small businesses are owned by women in developing countries (Lemmon, 2012.). Alternatively, this may also be because in western business practices, it is not seen as beneficial to exhibit perceived feminine traits. While eastern businesses tend to follow methods based around mutual respect and understanding, western businesses' expectations are for business leaders to be more ruthless, headstrong, and less sensitive or respectful.

Figure 2: Global Gender Gap index across various countries

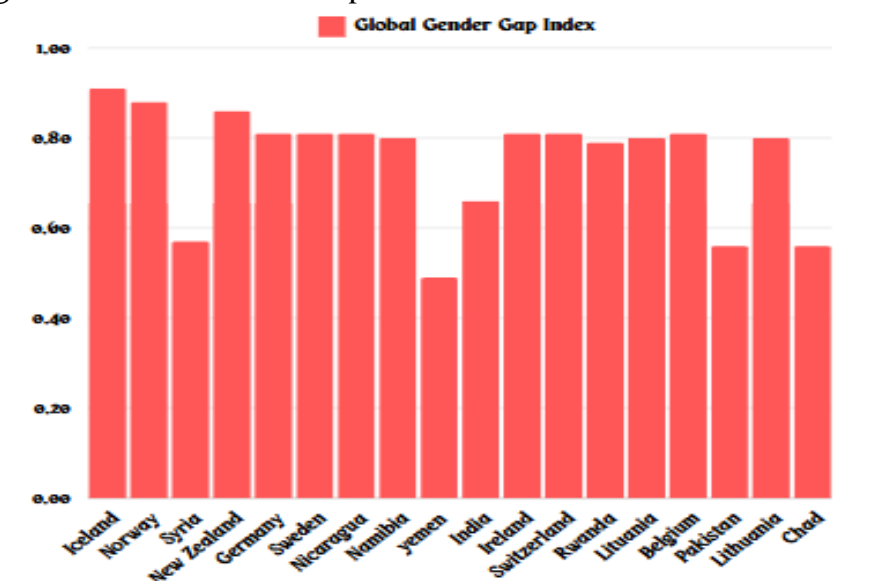


Figure 2 depicts the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), compiled by the World Economic Forum (WEF), provides a comprehensive assessment of gender disparities across countries. It evaluates four critical dimensions: economic participation, education, health, and political empowerment. In terms of economic participation, countries with higher gender equality tend to have more women in managerial positions and equal pay for equal work. Access to education is crucial, and nations prioritizing girls' education perform better. Ensuring women's health and addressing gender-based violence are essential for health and survival. Political empowerment, reflected in the percentage of women in leadership roles, showcases a country's commitment to gender equality. Iceland consistently leads the GGGI rankings, emphasizing its dedication to closing gender gaps. Other top-ranking countries include Norway, Finland, and New Zealand. These nations prioritize gender parity across all dimensions. Germany, Sweden, and Nicaragua also demonstrate strong performance, showcasing the importance of holistic policies. Namibia, Lithuania, and Belgium complete the top ten, highlighting regional diversity in achieving gender equality. Challenges persist: the impact of COVID-19 disproportionately affected women, disrupting economic participation and exacerbating existing inequalities. The political empowerment gap remains, with only 21% of countries having had a female head of state. Addressing wage gaps and promoting women's entrepreneurship are vital steps. Recognizing intersectionality—how gender equality intersects with race, ethnicity, disability, and other factors—is essential for inclusive policies.

BARRIERS TOWARDS PROGRESS

Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equity are the result of cultural norms. While many women are aware of the issues posed by gender inequality, others have become accustomed to it (Nussbaum, Martha C., 1995). Securing adequate funding remains a persistent challenge for women-led

businesses. Research consistently shows that women receive a disproportionately small share of venture capital investments. Biases and stereotypes often influence investment decisions, leading to unequal access to financial resources. To overcome this, women entrepreneurs must actively seek alternative funding options, such as angel investors, crowdfunding platforms, and grants specifically designed for women-owned businesses. Societal biases create an uneven playing field. Women entrepreneurs may encounter skepticism about their abilities, confidence, and commitment. Traits associated with business acumen in women—such as assertiveness or ambition—can be misperceived as aggression. Overcoming these biases requires resilience, self-advocacy, and a strong professional network. Women should actively challenge stereotypes and demonstrate their expertise through tangible achievements. Despite progress, women-owned businesses still struggle to access capital and secure federal contracts. Discrimination persists, affecting loan approvals, credit lines, and investment opportunities. Advocacy efforts are essential to level the playing field. Women entrepreneurs should actively engage with financial institutions, explore mentorship programs, and seek business development support. Additionally, advocating for policies that promote equal access to contracts and funding is crucial. Cultural expectations and societal norms often discourage women from pursuing entrepreneurship. Balancing family responsibilities, societal expectations, and business ambitions can be daunting. Women entrepreneurs must challenge these norms, build a support network, and celebrate their achievements. Mentorship and peer networks play a vital role in providing encouragement and guidance. Juggling business responsibilities with family life remains a significant barrier. Women often face the “double burden” of managing both professional and domestic roles. Prioritizing self-care, delegating tasks, and seeking flexible work arrangements are essential strategies. Organizations and policymakers can contribute by promoting family-friendly policies and fostering a supportive work environment.

Results

Table 1:- Represents the responses of the respondents.

Section A: responses of the respondents.		
1 In your opinion, what are the primary factors that hinder women from pursuing entrepreneurship?	a) Lack of financial resources	33.30%
	b) Societal expectations and gender roles	41.70%
	c) Limited access to education and training	8.30%
	d) Fear of failure	16.70%
2 Do you believe that government policies and programs adequately support women entrepreneurs?	a) Strongly agree	41.70%
	b) Agree	50.00%
	c) Disagree	8.30%
	d) Strongly disagree	0.00%
3 How important is mentorship and networking for women entrepreneurs?	a) Extremely important	75.00%
	b) Very important	25.00%
	c) Somewhat important	0.00%

	d) Not important	0.00%
4 What role does technology play in empowering women entrepreneurs?	a) A significant role	66.70%
	b) A moderate role	25.00%
	c) A minor role	8.30%
	d) No role	0.00%
5 Do you think women entrepreneurs face unique challenges compared to male entrepreneurs?	a) Yes, significantly	16.70%
	b) Yes, to some extent	66.70%
	c) No, not really	0.00%
	d) Not sure	16.70%

The table 1 reveals that 41.70% of respondents identified societal expectations and gender roles as the primary barrier to women's entrepreneurship, followed by a lack of financial resources (33.30%) and fear of failure (16.70%). 91.70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that government policies support women entrepreneurs. Notably, 100% of respondents recognized the extreme importance of mentorship and networking. Regarding technology's role, 66.70% believed it plays a significant or moderate role in empowering women entrepreneurs. Finally, 83.40% of respondents believe women entrepreneurs face unique challenges compared to male counterparts.

The results underscore the significance of societal barriers, such as gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices, in hindering women's entrepreneurial pursuits. The data also highlights the critical need for improved access to finance, including loans, grants, and investment opportunities. Addressing the psychological barriers, such as fear of failure and lack of confidence, is crucial for empowering women entrepreneurs. The findings strongly support the need for robust mentorship and networking programs, as well as the integration of technology to enhance women's entrepreneurial capabilities. The recognition of unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs emphasizes the importance of gender-specific interventions and policies.

Table 2:- Represents the personal experience and opinions of the respondents.

Section B: Personal Experiences and Opinions		
1 Have you ever considered starting your own business?	a) Yes	66.70%
	b) No	25.00%
	c) Not sure	8.30%
2 If yes, what factors influenced your decision?	a) Financial security	25.00%
	b) Work-life balance	8.30%
	c) Passion for a specific industry	25.00%
	d) Other	8.30%
	e) I have not pursued entrepreneurship	33.30%
3 If no, what are the primary reasons for not pursuing entrepreneurship?	a) Fear of failure	16.70%
	b) Lack of support	0.00%
	c) Financial constraints	41.70%

	d) Other	33.30%
	e) I have pursued entrepreneurship	8.30%
4 How can society encourage more women to become entrepreneurs?	a) Promote entrepreneurship education	33.30%
	b) Provide financial support and incentives	25.00%
	c) Challenge gender stereotypes	8.30%
	d) Create a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem	33.30%
5 What do you think is the most important quality for a successful entrepreneur, regardless of gender?	a) Creativity and innovation	33.30%
	b) Strong work ethic	33.30%
	c) Risk-taking ability	8.30%
	d) Leadership skills	25.00%
6 How can we improve access to funding and financing for women entrepreneurs?	a) Government grants and subsidies	58.30%
	b) Crowd funding platforms	8.30%
	c) Microfinance institutions	33.30%
	d) Angel investors and venture capitalists	0.00%
7 What are the specific challenges that women entrepreneurs face in accessing markets and customers?	a) Gender bias and discrimination	75.00%
	b) Lack of brand recognition	8.30%
	c) Difficulty in building business networks	16.70%
	d) Regulatory hurdles	0.00%
8 How can we create a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem for women?	a) Mentorship and coaching programs	58.30%
	b) Networking opportunities	25.00%
	c) Flexible work arrangements	8.30%
	d) Affordable child care options	8.30%
9 How can we encourage more women to pursue STEM-related fields and entrepreneurship?	a) Promote STEM education for girls	58.30%
	b) Offer role models and mentors	8.30%

10 What role can technology play in addressing the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs?	c) Provide scholarships and fellowships	33.30%
	d) Address gender bias in STEM workplaces	0.00%
	a) E-commerce and online marketplaces	8.30%
	b) Digital marketing and social media	33.30%
	c) Mobile applications and software tools	41.70%
	d) Remote work and virtual teams	16.70%

Table 2 provides insights into women's entrepreneurial intentions and perceptions. A significant 66.70% of respondents have considered starting their own business, indicating a strong interest in entrepreneurship. Among those who considered it, financial security (25.00%), passion for a specific industry (25.00%), and work-life balance (8.30%) were the primary motivating factors. However, for those who haven't pursued entrepreneurship, financial constraints (41.70%) and fear of failure (16.70%) emerged as the most significant deterrents. Respondents believe that promoting entrepreneurship education (33.30%), providing financial support and incentives (25.00%), and challenging gender stereotypes (33.30%) are key ways to encourage more women to become entrepreneurs. Creativity and innovation (33.30%), strong work ethic (33.30%), and leadership skills (25.00%) were identified as the most important qualities for successful entrepreneurs, regardless of gender. Regarding access to funding, respondents suggested government grants and subsidies (58.30%), microfinance institutions (33.30%), and crowdfunding platforms (8.30%) as effective avenues. Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing markets include gender bias and discrimination (75.00%) and difficulty in building business networks (16.70%). To create a more supportive ecosystem, respondents emphasized the importance of mentorship and coaching programs (58.30%), networking opportunities (25.00%), flexible work arrangements (8.30%), and affordable childcare options (8.30%). Encouraging more women to pursue STEM-related fields and entrepreneurship can be achieved by promoting STEM education (58.30%), offering role models and mentors (8.30%), and providing scholarships and fellowships (33.30%). Finally, technology, particularly digital marketing and social media (33.30%) and mobile applications and software tools (41.70%), is seen as crucial for addressing the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

Table 3:- Represents the responses of respondents on Measuring Impact and Future Outlook.

Section C: Measuring Impact and Future Outlook		
	a) Job creation and employment rates	66.70%

1 How can we measure the impact of women's entrepreneurship on economic growth and social development?	b) GDP growth and innovation	8.30%
	c) Poverty reduction and social equity	16.70%
	d) Gender equality and empowerment	8.30%
2 What are the future trends and opportunities for women entrepreneurs?	a) Sustainable and ethical business practices	33.30%
	b) Artificial intelligence and machine learning	41.70%
	c) The gig economy and freelance work	8.30%
	d) Social entrepreneurship and impact investing	16.70%
3 How can we ensure that the benefits of women's entrepreneurship are shared equitably?	a) Inclusive policies and regulations	16.70%
	b) Access to resources and opportunities	58.30%
	c) Fair labor practices and worker rights	8.30%
	d) Ethical business practices and corporate social responsibility	16.70%
4 What role can international cooperation play in promoting women's entrepreneurship?	a) Knowledge sharing and best practices	33.30%
	b) Joint initiatives and partnerships	41.70%
	c) Investment and financing	8.30%
	d) Capacity building and skills development	16.70%
5 How can we inspire the next generation of women entrepreneurs?	a) Role models and mentors	0.00%
	b) Education and training	41.70%
	c) Entrepreneurial ecosystems and incubators	33.30%
	d) Media and public awareness campaigns	25.00%
6 How can we address the issue of gender bias in accessing finance for women entrepreneurs?	a) Promote gender-sensitive lending criteria	0.00%

	b) Increase access to micro finance and credit	41.70%
	c) Encourage women-focused investment funds	0.00%
	d) All of the above	58.30%
7 What are the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in emerging markets and developing countries?	a) Limited access to infrastructure and technology	0.00%
	b) Cultural and societal barriers	41.70%
	c) Lack of legal and regulatory frameworks	8.30%
	d) All of the above	50.00%
8 How can we leverage technology to empower women entrepreneurs in rural areas?	a) E-commerce platforms	0.00%
	b) Digital literacy training	16.70%
	c) Mobile banking and financial services	8.30%
	d) All of the above	75.00%
9 What role can family and community play in supporting women's entrepreneurial aspirations?	a) Providing emotional support and encouragement	8.30%
	b) Offering financial assistance	8.30%
	c) Sharing knowledge and expertise	16.70%
	d) All of the above	66.70%
10 How can we measure the social impact of women-led businesses?	a) Job creation and employment opportunities	8.30%
	b) Poverty reduction and income inequality	25.00%
	c) Community development and social initiatives	25.00%
	d) All of the above	41.70%
11 What are the ethical considerations for women entrepreneurs in a globalized economy?	a) Fair labor practices and worker rights	0.00%
	b) Environmental sustainability and social responsibility	50.00%

	c) Ethical sourcing and supply chain management	16.70%
	d) All of the above	33.30%
12 How can we foster a culture of innovation and risk-taking among women entrepreneurs?	a) Mentorship and coaching programs	0.00%
	b) Entrepreneurship education and training	41.70%
	c) Innovation hubs and accelerators	16.70%
	d) All of the above	41.70%
13 What are the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in balancing work and family responsibilities?	a) Childcare and eldercare	8.30%
	b) Time management and work-life balance	16.70%
	c) Gender stereotypes and societal expectations	8.30%
	d) All of the above	66.70%
14 What are the long-term implications of women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship?	a) Reduced poverty and inequality	16.70%
	b) Increased social mobility and upward mobility	0.00%
	c) Stronger economies and societies	8.30%
	d) All of the above	75.00%

Table 3 provides insights into the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in various contexts. The majority of respondents, 50.00%, recognize that women entrepreneurs in emerging markets and developing countries face multiple challenges, encompassing limited access to infrastructure and technology (0.00%), cultural and societal barriers (41.70%), and lack of legal and regulatory frameworks (8.30%). A strong consensus, 75.00%, suggests that leveraging technology through digital literacy training (16.70%), mobile banking and financial services (8.30%), and e-commerce platforms (0.00%) is crucial for empowering women entrepreneurs in rural areas. Respondents believe that family and community play a significant role in supporting women's entrepreneurial aspirations by providing emotional support and encouragement (8.30%), offering financial assistance (8.30%), and sharing knowledge and expertise (16.70%). A large proportion, 66.70%, emphasized the importance of all of these factors. The data indicates that measuring the social impact of women-led businesses should encompass job creation and employment opportunities (8.30%), poverty reduction and income inequality (25.00%), community development and social initiatives (25.00%), and all of the

above (66.70%). Respondents highlighted the importance of ethical considerations for women entrepreneurs in a globalized economy, with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability and social responsibility (50.00%), ethical sourcing and supply chain management (16.70%), and fair labor practices and worker rights (0.00%). A significant proportion, 33.30%, acknowledged the importance of all of these factors. Fostering a culture of innovation and risk-taking among women entrepreneurs can be achieved through entrepreneurship education and training (41.70%), mentorship and coaching programs (0.00%), and innovation hubs and accelerators (16.70%). A significant proportion, 41.70%, emphasized the importance of all of these approaches. The data indicates that women entrepreneurs face multiple challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities, including childcare and eldercare (8.30%), time management and work-life balance (16.70%), and gender stereotypes and societal expectations (8.30%). A significant proportion, 66.70%, acknowledged that all of these factors contribute to the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Finally, respondents believe that women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship has significant long-term implications, including reduced poverty and inequality (16.70%), increased social mobility and upward mobility (0.00%), and stronger economies and societies (8.30%). A significant proportion, 75.00%, acknowledged that all of these factors are important long-term implications.

DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals a multifaceted picture of women's entrepreneurship, echoing and expanding upon recent research. Consistent with findings from scholars like Marlow and Patton (2015) and Brush (2018), the analysis underscores the critical role of social networks and mentorship in fostering women's entrepreneurial success. The strong emphasis on the importance of mentorship, networking, and supportive ecosystems in all three tables reinforces the significance of strong social connections and guidance in empowering women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the findings corroborate existing research on the persistent influence of societal barriers, such as gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices, as documented in recent studies by Carter et al. (2015) and Bird (2019). These barriers limit women's access to resources and hinder their entrepreneurial pursuits. The data consistently highlights the critical need for improved access to finance, aligning with research by Brush (2014) and Carter et al. (2015), which emphasizes financial constraints as a major obstacle for women entrepreneurs. The analysis underscores the need for targeted financial support programs, including access to loans, grants, and investment opportunities, to bridge the funding gap and empower women to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations. The analysis also sheds light on the significant psychological barriers, such as fear of failure and lack of confidence, that impede women's entrepreneurial journeys. This aligns with more recent research by Bird (2018) and Fayolle and Gailly (2015), which emphasizes the importance of addressing psychological barriers and building self-efficacy among women entrepreneurs. The findings strongly support the need for programs that foster entrepreneurial skills, provide mentorship and coaching, and address fear of failure to empower women to pursue their entrepreneurial goals. The analysis reveals several new findings, expanding upon

existing research. Notably, the data emphasizes the specific role of family and community support in women's entrepreneurial journeys, highlighting the importance of social capital and the role of local networks in empowering women entrepreneurs. This finding aligns with recent research on the social embeddedness of entrepreneurial activity by Uzzi (2013) and Aldrich and Fiol (2015). Moreover, the analysis provides valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in emerging markets and developing countries, emphasizing the need for context-specific interventions. This aligns with recent research by Aidoo et al. (2021), which highlights the importance of addressing the specific needs and challenges of women entrepreneurs in different contexts. The analysis underscores the importance of ethical considerations and social responsibilities associated with women's entrepreneurship in a globalized economy. This finding contributes to the growing body of research on the social and environmental impacts of entrepreneurship (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2006). Overall, the analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing women's entrepreneurship, building upon recent research and contributing new insights into the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in today's dynamic and interconnected world.

CONCLUSION

Women's empowerment in entrepreneurship requires dismantling barriers such as limited funding, gender biases, and cultural norms. By advocating for equal opportunities, challenging stereotypes, and fostering supportive networks, women can thrive as entrepreneurs. Embracing resilience, learning from setbacks, and promoting inclusive policies are essential steps toward a more equitable entrepreneurial landscape. Women entrepreneurs challenge societal norms, break down barriers, and contribute substantially to economic growth and poverty reduction. As we shape a sustainable recovery from the pandemic, including the voices of female social entrepreneurs is crucial. Let's recognize that women's economic empowerment isn't just about individual gains; it's about transforming power, voice, and choice for women in markets and society. Furthermore, empowering women entrepreneurs in regions like Kashmir requires a nuanced approach that addresses the specific challenges faced by women in conflict-affected and marginalized communities. This includes improving access to resources, providing culturally sensitive training and mentorship programs, and creating safe and inclusive spaces for women to network and collaborate. By addressing these critical issues, we can empower women entrepreneurs in Kashmir to contribute to economic growth, social development, and peace building efforts in the region.

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