

Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship: The Way Ahead

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ABSTRACT

Women have always been considered to play an important part in the growth and development process. Promoting gender equality and economic empowerment of women is recognized as one of the important aspects of the Millennium Development Goals. The Sustainable Developmental goals too emphasize the importance of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. However, the reality is that women have often been denied equal position and status in society. Their growth prospects have been stunted either due to cultural or socio-economic factors. Women today constitute 50% of the total population and in India alone women perform 66% of the world's work, and produce 50% of the food. But sadly women today not only lack access to finance, market, infrastructure and social service, technology etc. as compared to their male counterparts but they also face various socio-economic and other problems as they are not treated at par with men. The stakes are high and the challenges that lie ahead are enormous, but with the support of the Government as well as the various institutions, transformation can take place. Empowering women through development of entrepreneurship has been considered as an important mechanism for the overall inclusive growth of the economy. It will lead to not only the economic empowerment of women but also to the cognitive, political and psychological empowerment. This would then translate into a rippling effect as it would improve both the status of women and also provide them with the necessary income required for their sustenance. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the concept of women empowerment, the methods used to measure it, the logical reasoning to establish whether there exists a correlation between women empowerment and the benefits that accrue from it.

Key words: Women Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, sustainable development goals

Introduction:

“There is no force equal to a woman, who is determined to rise. Empowering women is a key to building a future that we want.”

Women constitute around one-half of the potential human capital in any economy. It has been increasingly realized that women play a very important role in the developmental process. Promoting gender equality by empowering women was recognized as an important Millennium Development and Sustainable Development Goal. Study reveals that economic empowerment of women would not only help in achieving broad objectives like economic growth, poverty reduction, reduction in unemployment, better health, education etc. but would also lead to the overall growth and development of the human being. An empowered person would have a deep insight into one's own life and would also work to bring about a transformation for the betterment of other lives. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the concept of women empowerment, the methods used to measure it and to find out whether there exists a correlation between women empowerment and development of entrepreneurship.

Selection of the topic:

Entrepreneurship as a means to empower women has gained a lot of importance in recent times. The authorities have now realized that this could be easily achieved by focusing on the Entrepreneurship development of women. Thus observing the grave vitality that this topic unfolds, it is of paramount importance that we focus on the initiatives taken in order to empower women through the development of women entrepreneurship.

Objectives:

The researcher through this paper aims at analyzing on the following objectives:

- To understand the Government's industrial policy environment towards women entrepreneurship development in India.
- To find out if there exists a relationship between Economic empowerment of women and development of women entrepreneurship in India.

Hypothesis:

- There is a relationship between development of women entrepreneurship and economic empowerment of women in India.

Research Methodology and Data

Base:

This study is based on secondary data and literature reviews. The secondary data has been primarily taken from World Bank Report, Economic Survey, Ministry of MSME etc.

Literature Review:

Reviewing the existing literature helps us to educate ourselves about the available knowledge in this sphere and to find any gaps that may exist in the research.

Researchers	Observations
Schwartz ¹ (1979)	Female entrepreneurs start business basically to be independent, for job satisfaction and economic necessity.
Singh (1992) and Singh and Sengupta ² (1991)	Singh (1992) and Singh and Sengupta (1991) have asserted that it is the urge to satisfy social needs that has enabled women to plunge into entrepreneurship.
Mohiuddin Asghari ³ (1983)	Women become entrepreneurs due to

	economic needs, family occupation, to achieve power, to satisfy personality needs and as a leisure activity.
Anjaneya Swamy and Deepak Raajan ⁴ (2003)	A multi-pronged approach needs to be adopted to motivate the women to pursue entrepreneurial activities
Cohoon, Wadhwa& Mitchell, ⁵ (2010)	Mentoring is very important to women, which provides encouragement & financial support of business partners.
Kumar and Gugloth ⁶ (2012)	It found that the period of liberalization and the development of MSMEs sector constituted an important segment of our economy.
Department for International Development ⁷ (2001)	The study established a positive correlation between training provided to women in business skills and increase in income levels attained which in turn can lead to the economic empowerment of women.

Analysis:

Entrepreneurship as a means to empower women has gained a lot of importance in recent times. Entrepreneurship has always been a part of Indian tradition. In a study conducted by F. Handy, B. Ranade and M.Kasam⁸ in 2007, “To profit or not to profit: Women Entrepreneurs in India”, has stated that entrepreneurship has enabled women in India with a platform to enter into the various arenas which was previously a taboo to them”. Thus development of women entrepreneurship has been considered as an important determinant for the progress of a nation. It has led to increase not only in the development of the nation but also in increasing the GDP per capita income of the nation.

The following diagram depicts the capabilities that a woman could attain by pursuing entrepreneurship.

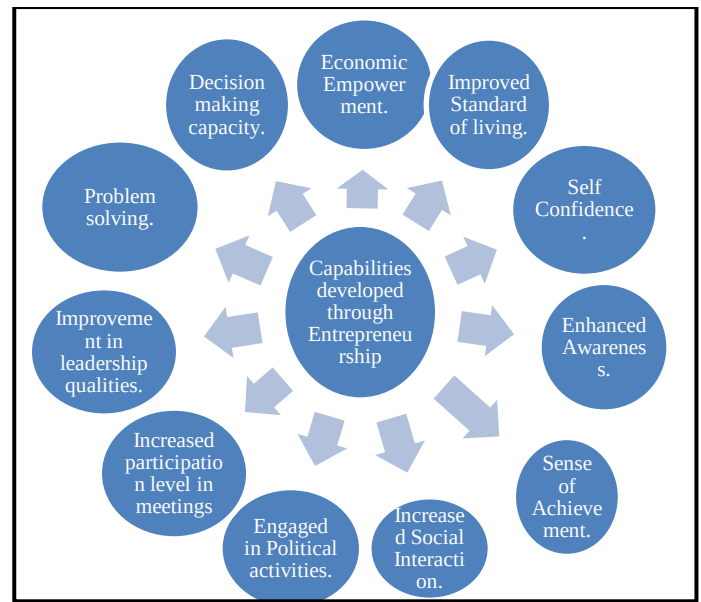


Fig: 1 Benefits acquired through Entrepreneurship

Women have played an important role in the socio- economic development of the country. There is no denying that women have contributed a lot in terms of the overall growth and prospects of the country. But it is only from the fifth year Plan (1974-79) that the focus of the Government has shifted from women welfare to women development. The Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO), the nationalized banks and even NGO's have taken initiatives and steps to develop women entrepreneurship in India. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation was set up in 1954 as an apex body for sustained and organised growth of MSME's. Within next two years, the National Small Industries Corporation, the Khadi and the Coir Board

were also set up. The Government laid special thrust on women's employment in order to make them self-reliant. The following are some of the programmes initiated.

Policy Landmarks:⁹

Year	Programmes Initiated
1951-56	The Central Social Welfare Board was set up in 1953 to promote welfare related activities for women and children.
1956-61	Women were organized into Mahila Mandals in rural areas for facilitating health, nutrition and welfare measures.
1961-66	Priority was given to women's education, immunization of pre-schoolchildren and supplementary diet for children and expectant and nursing mothers.
1969-74	Family and child welfare centres were established to serve women, children and the families in the block. In 1971, the Government of India appointed a committee to study the status of women (CWSI).

1974-79	There was a shift in approach to women issues from welfare orientation to a developmental approach.
1980-85	It promoted the development of 'Beneficiary Oriented Schemes' (BOS) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas(DWCRA) to impart women some training. Krishi Vigyan kendras was introduced which provided information of farm technology to women farmers.
1985-90	Empowerment and equality of women was given importance in this plan period. During the Seventh five- year plan (1985-90) various schemes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), etc. were started. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up in 1992 to study matters relating to women safeguards.
1992-97	A shift was made from development to empowerment of women. The Constitutional amendment was made for at least 30%

	representation in all elected local self- Government bodies such as Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipalities.		The Ministry of MSME launched a special scheme known as Small Industry Clusters Development Programme (SICDP).
1997-2002	Women's Component Plan (WCP) was adopted through which not less than 30% of the funds should flow to women from all the general development sectors. The National Perspective Plan (NPP) for women was adopted in the year 2000 for the development of women.	2012-17	The enactment of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006 is a harbinger for the growth of MSME Sector. The Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development has set a target of creating 500 million skilled people by 2022 with emphasis on inclusiveness.
2002-07	The National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) organized Entrepreneurship programmes for women. A minimum of 30% reservation was made for women in public sector services. An exclusive development bank for women entrepreneurs in the micro and small scale industries was recommended.	2015	Micro Unit Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) Banks were started to fund and promote microfinance institutions (MFIs). The main aim of the scheme is to "fund the unfunded". "Start Up India Stand Up India" Scheme aims not only at providing loans at the lowest possible rates but would also provide training and entrepreneurial skills to women entrepreneurs. The Make in India campaign has promised Rs.10,000 crore fund to be set aside for entrepreneurs (women) as well as for
2007-12	The Government planned to ensure that at least 33% of all direct and indirect benefits of all schemes flow to women and girl children.		

	handholding and for scaling-up enterprise productivity. The 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', Working Women's Hostel, Women helpline scheme, Nari Shakti Puraskar, One Stop Centre Scheme, Ujjwala, are some of the policy initiated by the Indian Government for empowerment of women.
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Recent surveys by Goldman Sachs and Price Water House Coopers, have estimated that by 2050, India will be one of the top leading economies in the world. (Outlook Business, May5, 2007). India has huge potential to unearth this wealth through development of entrepreneurship. It has been found that establishment of micro-entrepreneurship can give a fillip to the empowerment of women. Micro-enterprises generate employment opportunities which result in increasing nation's productivity as well as in developing greater economic independence, personal and social capabilities among women. Thus empowering women through the development of entrepreneurship is considered to be an important tool initiated for the growth prospects of women. The concept of empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their choices.

Empowerment is probably the totality of the following similar capabilities:



Characteristics of Economic Empowerment

Thus the very essence of empowerment lies in the fact that woman should have decision making power and should play an integral part in controlling one's own future. An empowered woman thus will

definitely be able to adapt create, innovate and exploit better the resources available. According to Stromquist¹⁰ empowerment must include the following dimensions: Cognitive, Economic, Political and Psychological components.

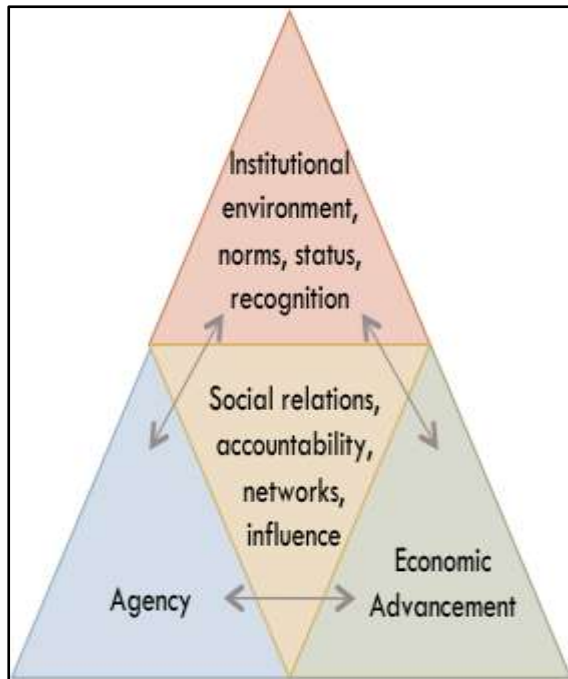
- The Cognitive Dimension refers to women having an understanding of the conditions and causes of their subordination at the micro and macro levels.
- The Political element entails that women have the capability to analyse and mobilize social change.
- The Psychological dimension includes the belief that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve the society in which they live.
- The Economic component requires that women have access to, and control over, productive resources, thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy.

Economic empowerment of women has been defined as, ‘the capacity of women to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible

to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth’.

According to a research conducted by Diana Wu¹¹ of The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, Women’s Economic Empowerment represents four domains.

1. **Agency:** Includes decision making power, knowledge, skills, access to markets, strategies and technologies.
2. **Institutional, environment, norms, recognition and status:** Includes social and physical environment, values and institutions which facilitates improved status for women.
3. **Social relations, accountability, networks, Influence:** Includes bargaining and negotiating powers, collaborative and collective activity.
4. **Economic Advancement:** Includes control over income, assets, employment.



Source: Illustration inspired by: CARE (2010). Governance Programming Framework

Economic Empowerment of women characterizes equality between male and female. It provides an atmosphere of security for the women. Research¹² has validated that higher the labour force participation of women, greater is the benefit that the economy attains. It not only leads to an increase in the consumption levels in the short run but also leads to a considerable increase in differential savings in the long run. Women's economic empowerment thus has a definite positive co-relation to the

growth, prosperity and development of the nation.

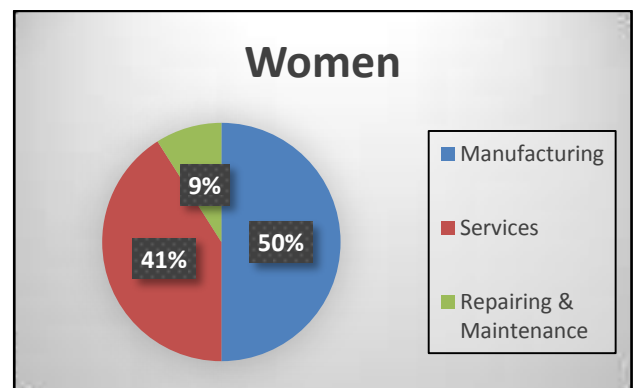
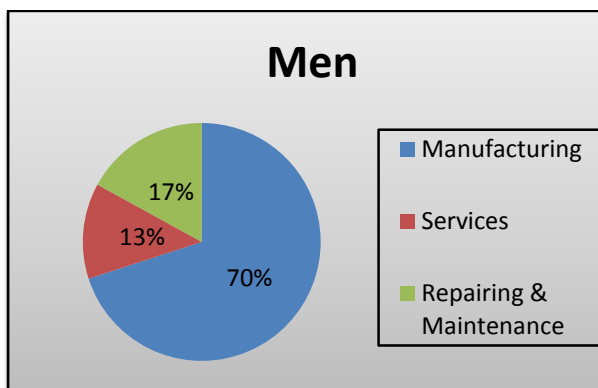
Researchers in their studies have time and again emphasized the importance of investing in Women's Economic Empowerment Movement. The Government and policy makers should therefore aim their focus on empowering women. This makes it important for us to ascertain a standard set of indicator to measure it. Due to its subjectivity, it was proposed to clearly identify and distinguish the indicators into measures which are Qualitative and Quantitative in nature. Accordingly, the Beijing Conference¹³ 1995 had proposed Qualitative and Quantitative indicators of women empowerment.

Qualitative Indicators	Quantitative Indicators
• Increase in self-esteem, individual and collective confidence	• Demographic Trends- ➤ Maternal Mortality Rate ➤ Fertility Rate ➤ Sex Ratio ➤ Life Expectancy at birth ➤ Average age of marriage
• Increase in articulation, knowledge and nutrition, reproductive rights, law and literacy.	
• Increase and decrease in personal leisure time and time for child care,	
• Increase or decrease of work load in new programmes.	
• Change in roles and responsibility in family and community.	
• Visible increase or decrease in violence on women and girls.	
• Responses to changes in social customs like child marriage, dowry, and discrimination against widows.	• Number of Women participating in different development programmes.
• Increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home and community.	• Visible change in physical health status and nutritional level.
• Increase access to and ability to gather information.	• Change in literacy and enrollment levels.
• Formation of women collectives.	• Change in the participation levels of women in political process.
• Positive changes in social attitudes.	• Increased training programmes for women

• Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution.	• Changes in the existence of women's organisations.
• Women's decision -making over her work and income	• Increase in the availability of support systems for women.
• Increased control and use of money to save & invest.	• Increased earnings of Women.
• Increased mobility of women.	• Laws enacted to protect and provide women's property rights.
• Increased levels of confidence.	• Increased number of women owning businesses.
• Improved consumption levels of individual and households.	• Increased savings and holding of assets by women.
• Improved family wealth and well- being.	• Increased number of schemes and banks exclusively for women.
• Increased awareness of women's rights and safety.	• Labour laws enacted for women.

Based on the indicators stated above, research has helped in establishing the positive co-relation between economic empowerment of women and the development of entrepreneurship among women. In the diagram below the percentage share of men and women

engaged in the various sectors have been depicted. We find that performance of women entrepreneurs in the year 2011-12 have started gaining ground and they are slowly closing with the men in terms of participation in the various sectors.



Source: Fourth All India Census of MSME, 2006-07, Ministry of MSME

The following table provides a picture of the improvement that has taken place over

Progress of Indian Women¹⁴, 2008

Indicators	Women	Men	Women	Men
Population (in million in 1971& 2011)	264.1	284.0	575	617
Sex Ratio (1971 &2011)	930		940	
Expectation of life at birth (1971& 2011)	50.2	50.5	69.6	67.3
Mean Age at Marriage (1971 &2011)	17.2	22.4	19.4	23.9
Birth rate (1971 & 2011)				

the years as a result of the various initiatives and programmes undertaken.

Death Rate (1970 &2011)	15.6	15.8	6.8	8.0
Infant Mortality Rate (1978 & 2011)	131	123	55	52
Child Death Rate (2007) (0-4 Years)			16.9	15.2
(2007) (5-14 Years)			1.2	1.1
Maternal Mortality Rate (1980 &2011)	468		254	
Literacy Rates (1971 & 2011)	7.9	24.9	54.28	75.96

Gross Enrollment Ratio (1990-91 & 2006-07) (%)				
Classes I-V	85.5	113.9	107.8	114.4
Classes VI-VIII	47.8	76.6	69.5	77.4
Drop-out Rate (1990-91 & 2006-07) (%)				
Classes I-V	46	40.1	26.6	24.4
Classes I-VIII			45.3	46.6
Work Participation Rate (1971 & 2001) (%)	14.2	52.8	25.68	51.93
Organized Sector (No. in lakhs in 1971 & 2006)	19.3	155.6	51.21	218.72

Public Sector (No. in lakhs in 1971 & 2006)	8.5	98.7	30.03	151.85
Enterprises by gender of owner (%): Rural areas (2006) & (2012) : Urban areas	10.69 6.67	89.09 92.49	15.27 12.45	84.73 87.55
Distribution of Enterprises (%): Micro(2006) & (2012) : Small Medium	9.10 3.01 ----	90.43 96.81 90.44	14.19 5.06 4.21	85.81 94.94 95.79

From the table above, we can conclude that over the years there has been an improvement in the socio-economic indicators affecting women which in turn

has led to the economic empowerment of women. There have been many studies conducted to establish the co-relation between development of entrepreneurship among women and their economic empowerment. -In a study conducted by Kirve and Kanitkar (1993)¹⁵ on their experience with a Pune based NGO- Jan Prabodhini, it was found that when awareness and skill training were provided to the women it became a means to build up confidence among them. Thus encouraging entrepreneurship among women has opened up channels to empower women. In another study by Singla (1984)¹⁶ it was observed that Group Women Entrepreneurship approach could be another alternative to empower women by enlivening traditional crafts, skills and activities and thereby bring about economic, social and democratic transformation. Women who are involved in entrepreneurial activity consider themselves more powerful as the entire authority in terms of ownership of assets lie in her hands.

Conclusion:

The above analysis clearly states that indicators based on demography as well as the percentage of women owned

enterprises in MSME's clearly portray a progressive trend over the years. The various initiatives taken by the Government for empowering women through the entrepreneurial schemes has enabled the total number of women owned enterprises in India to increase from 14.1% in 1970-71 to 30% in 2010-11¹⁷. Thus there has been a change and transition over the years. Women have acquired the required psychological satisfaction which has enabled them to build for themselves a strong and distinct identity. Thus Entrepreneurship can definitely improve the socio- economic status of women in the society. The only challenge ahead is to build up this momentum and institutionalize ways to promote development of women. There is a positive correlation between development of entrepreneurship and empowerment of women. Women can shape their own destinies by involving themselves in innovative activities which will help them fulfil their dreams, to perform better and face challenges more firmly. Increased and continued support should be provided in terms of initiating right policies, providing better infrastructure, finance, marketing as well encouragement and motivation at all times. This will help then enable them to

break from the glass ceilings and move beyond their horizons to achieve greater strides.

“So let’s envision a world where it’s possible to achieve one’s best and strive hard to unearth all the hidden potentialities”.

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