

Trajectory of Women Social Entrepreneurship in India: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract:

The field of social entrepreneurship, which focusses on implementing solutions to social, cultural, and environmental issues, remains overwhelmingly male-dominated. According to ongoing research, women social entrepreneurs are frequently expected to behave masculinely in order to succeed. The study presented in this article looked at the conceptual understanding of women's social entrepreneurship as well as the challenges that women face when starting social enterprises in India. The present study analyzed Bibliometrics of studies conducted on women social entrepreneurship in India and analyses challenges faced by women led social enterprises in India. The study follows Bibliometrics method to application of statistical methods to the study of bibliographic data. From the analysis of secondary data it was found that gender, societal, technological and financial barriers exist in women social entrepreneurship. To address this, proposed theoretical framework of the factors that determines the growth of female-owned Social enterprises.

Keywords: women social enterprises, Bibliometrics analysis, challenges, gender, entrepreneurship.

Introduction

An entrepreneur is a business leader who seeks and implements new ideas to stimulate economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship is one of the most important contributors to the country's economic growth. Entrepreneurs play an important role not only in the

development of the industrial sector, but also in the agricultural and service sectors. An entrepreneur is someone who has the imagination, skill, and motivation to start his own business or be creative, and who strives for high goals. They serve as a catalyst for social change and promote the

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greater good. They seek out opportunities, identify them, and primarily exploit them for financial gain. An action-oriented entrepreneur is always willing to take risks to achieve the desired results (Kapur, 2018).

Entrepreneurship development in India took off in the early 2000s, and it has transformed the country's economy. This momentum has been fuelled by the Indian economy's growth, increased access to venture capital, the establishment of incubators, and a large pool of talent. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's (GEM) National Entrepreneurship Context Index (NECI), India is ranked fourth out of 51 countries in terms of entrepreneurship ecosystem quality.

This score is a significant improvement over India's 2021 ranking of 16th. India has emerged as a global startup epicentre, ranking third with over 90,000 startups and 107 unicorn enterprises valued at \$30 billion, trailing only the United States and China, according to Mint. The subcontinent has implemented government schemes to promote entrepreneurship in India, such as the Startup India Action Plan, which provides legal support, improved regulations, tax breaks, and economic stimulus through the 'Fund of Funds' initiative to provide financial and infrastructural assistance to emerging businesses.

Several other national flagship programmes, including Make in India,

Stand-up India (which provides bank loans to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and women entrepreneurs starting new businesses), and Digital India, have been introduced to promote the growth of more efficient and highly skilled micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (Futurize, 2023).

Entrepreneurship in India is poised for a transformative decade, with Tier II and Tier III cities emerging as hotspots due to improved infrastructure and internet connectivity. According to a Nasscom report, the Indian startup ecosystem will create over 1.25 million direct job opportunities by 2025. This growth is attributed to the government's emphasis on developing a digital economy, implementing tax cuts, and establishing government-sponsored incubators.

Initiatives in agriculture, healthcare, and renewable energy all contribute to innovation. India's rapidly developing economy, which has a 7.2% GDP growth rate, is fuelled by government investments in infrastructure, digital connectivity, and financial inclusion, creating significant opportunities in industries such as e-commerce and fintech. Entrepreneurship's enormous potential to reshape the socioeconomic environment requires increased investment and engagement across the entrepreneurial eco-system (Futurize, 2023).

The role of entrepreneurship in India as a driver of the country's growth and development is highlighted, with a focus

on the impact of entrepreneurial registrations on economic development, particularly in terms of addressing the widespread problem of unemployment. The study emphasises the beneficial relationship between a country's growth and employment levels, and entrepreneurship plays an important role in achieving this balance (Sahu & Pandey, 2023). The findings show that, while entrepreneurship has enormous potential for addressing economic challenges, it must be guided, assisted, and supported (financially, technically, and legally) in order to effectively improve the economic situation.

The creation of a policy framework in India to encourage entrepreneurship and cultivate an innovative culture, which is critical for achieving maximum economic growth. It proposes that large private-sector corporations and research institutions mentor and fund startups. To become an innovation leader, India must increase its gross R&D expenditure to compete with leading economies. The report provides valuable information for policymakers and stakeholders, offering advice on removing barriers and encouraging creative entrepreneurial activity in India (Srikanth, Kumar, & Reddy, 2020).

Social Entrepreneurship in India

The potential for social entrepreneurship is enormous in a country like India, where there are significant differences in culture, societies,

economies, development achievements, and so on (Saebi, Foss, & Linder, 2019). The country is referred to as an emerging giant, with a notable GDP growth rate, but it faces a number of social and developmental challenges that are dividing the country and impeding its progress. The funding for public services such as education, healthcare, and public transportation is rapidly dwindling, while for-profit businesses remain out of reach for the poor (OECD, 2021). Increasing disparities and a lack of empathy for the marginalised are causing a slew of socioeconomic problems in India. To address this, product and service innovation, as well as an entrepreneurial mindset, may help to close the wealth gap by providing high-quality, affordable, accessible, and compassionate public services to the poor. Social entrepreneurship is one example of a leadership and organisational practice that can help India address its pressing socioeconomic problems. To address India's problems, communities, corporations, governments, civil society, and individuals all engage in social entrepreneurship (Agrawal & Sahasranamam, 2016).

Women Social Entrepreneurship

Women's social entrepreneurship in India is a dynamic and rapidly expanding phenomenon that is transforming the country's economic and social landscape. Despite facing numerous systemic challenges such as gender discrimination, limited access to resources, and cultural

biases, women in India are increasingly taking on leadership roles in the social enterprise industry. With initiatives such as microfinance programs, women's cooperatives, and community-based enterprises, these female entrepreneurs use their distinct perspectives and experiences to address a wide range of pressing social issues, from healthcare and education to environmental sustainability and rural development (Mane, 2024).

Women social entrepreneurs in India are not only driving economic empowerment and gender equality, but also promoting inclusive growth and sustainable development throughout the country (Kumar & Shobana, 2023). As change agents, they are breaking down barriers, challenging stereotypes, and inspiring future generations of women to pursue entrepreneurship for the benefit of society.

Rationale of the Study

According to a British Council study, 24% of social enterprises are led by women, compared to 8.9% in mainstream business/private sector firms. More than half of social enterprises create direct employment by hiring disadvantaged groups, nearly two-thirds work with the goal of creating jobs, and more than half provide skill training to vulnerable groups. Social enterprises have an average of 19 employees (17 full-time and 4 part-time). Women account for 25% of full-time employees and 65% of part-time employees (the British Council, 2020).

The fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) focusses on gender equality in all aspects of life, but women continue to lag behind due to societal, gender, and economic barriers (British Council, 2017). This section provides a brief overview of India's social, political, and economic landscape, as well as the environment in which social enterprises operate. It summarises existing research on social enterprise in the country and then lists existing organisations that support social enterprise, either explicitly or as part of a larger mandate (Natu & Singh, 2016).

In this context it is clear that women led social enterprises has sustainability in future therefore more studies need to be conducted to explore novel module to address challenges encountered by women social entrepreneurs.

Objectives of the Study

- Conduct bibliometric analysis of studies conducted on women social entrepreneurship in India
- Analyze challenges faced by women led social enterprises in India

Method and Materials

This descriptive study uses the bibliometrics method to apply statistical methods to the analysis of bibliographic data (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey, & Lim, 2021). The number of studies focusing on women social entrepreneurs in India has gradually increased, particularly over the last two decades, indicating growing academic and policy interest.

A search of various sources (e.g., Google Scholar, journal databases) may reveal more than 200-300 academic papers on this topic, including articles, conference papers, reports, and books. We reviewed some of the studies conducted in India on women's social entrepreneurship, identified various issues and challenges faced by women-led social enterprises, and provided future research directions.

Bibliometric Analysis of the studies conducted on women led Social Enterprises in India

This study examined studies conducted by various authors on women's social entrepreneurship. A bibliometric analysis of studies on female social entrepreneurs in India provides a quantitative overview of academic research in this area, revealing patterns such as publication trends, author productivity, journal impact, and research themes. While we do not have access to real-time databases or direct bibliometric data, we can provide a general framework for conducting such an analysis and summaries some key findings from existing literature.

Women Social Enterprises is a Game Changer

Women Social Entrepreneurship is a novel concept that has gained popularity in recent years due to its numerous socioeconomic benefits (Sharma, Singla, and Grover, 2015). Based on a review of the social entrepreneurship literature, the authors identify hybridity, or the pursuit of the

dual mission of financial sustainability and social purpose, as the defining feature of SEs. They evaluate the impact of hybridity on SE mission management, financial resource acquisition, and human resource mobilisation, and present a framework for understanding the tensions and trade-offs that result from hybridity (Doherty, Haugh, and Lyon, 2014).

In-depth interviews with 80 social entrepreneurs revealed five key themes that could be used to compare and contrast the practice of social entrepreneurship to for-profit entrepreneurship. These include the entrepreneurial process, specifically opportunity recognition; network embeddedness; the nature of financial risk and profit; the role of individual versus collective action in enterprise management and structure; and creativity and innovation (Shaw & Carter, 2007).

Social entrepreneurship contributes to the greater good by promoting community interests and encouraging association, empowerment, inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability (Haugh & Doherty, 2022).

Unique Challenges Faced by Women Social Entrepreneurs in India

Women face gendered structural barriers, such as limited access to capital and networks, but their businesses frequently address under-represented social issues (Edelman, Manolova, & Brush, 2017). Furthermore, gender bias and access to finance are more likely to be driven by social goals (Greene, Hart,

Gatewood, Brush, & Carter, 2003). Studies on the impact of COVID-19 reveal a significant bias towards women's empowerment in ICT, digitisation, and e-commerce, exposing the need for gender-moderated policies and governmental interventions (Raman, Subramaniam, Nair, Shivdas, Achutha, & Nedungadi, 2024). Lack of financial support is followed by a lack of knowledge about social entrepreneurship, difficulties in balancing work and family life, a lack of confidence in skills and ability, a greater fear of failure, a lack of training, social, cultural, and family pressure, a business environment that is more accessible to men, and prejudices and discrimination that impede women's social entrepreneurship (Zeibote & Ponomarjova, 2024).

Women frequently have less access to venture capital and loans, but they successfully overcome these barriers through alternative funding sources such as crowd funding (Tillmar, Ahl, Berglund, & Pettersson, 2022). Women as social entrepreneurs and owners/managers of micro- and small-tourism businesses. Unpacking how the motivation to pursue these goals provides platforms for women to identify and serve defined community needs related to tourism serves as a foundation for discussing the broader development impacts of women who own and manage STFs. (Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016). Brush et al. describe the '5M' framework, which includes 'Money', 'Market', 'Management', 'Macro and Meso

environments', and the framework's highlight, 'Motherhood'. The application of this framework is appropriate in a South Asian context where enormous social norms for women have been practiced for centuries. Women entrepreneurs contribute to social change by focussing on health, education, and poverty alleviation in underserved areas (Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Key Insights from Existing Literature on Women Social Entrepreneurs in India:

Rising Interest in Social Entrepreneurship: Social entrepreneurship, particularly among women in India, has received increased attention in recent years. This reflects the global rise of social entrepreneurship as a strategy for addressing societal issues, particularly in emerging markets such as India.

Barriers to Women Social Entrepreneurs: Women entrepreneurs in India face unique challenges, such as access to finance, societal gender norms, a lack of mentorship, and limited market access. Research frequently focusses on how these barriers are overcome through grassroots movements, community support, and social networks.

Impact of Social Enterprises: Many studies highlight the transformative role of female social entrepreneurs in addressing pressing social issues such as poverty, education, healthcare, and gender equality. Women-led social enterprises frequently target underserved and

marginalised communities, especially in rural areas.

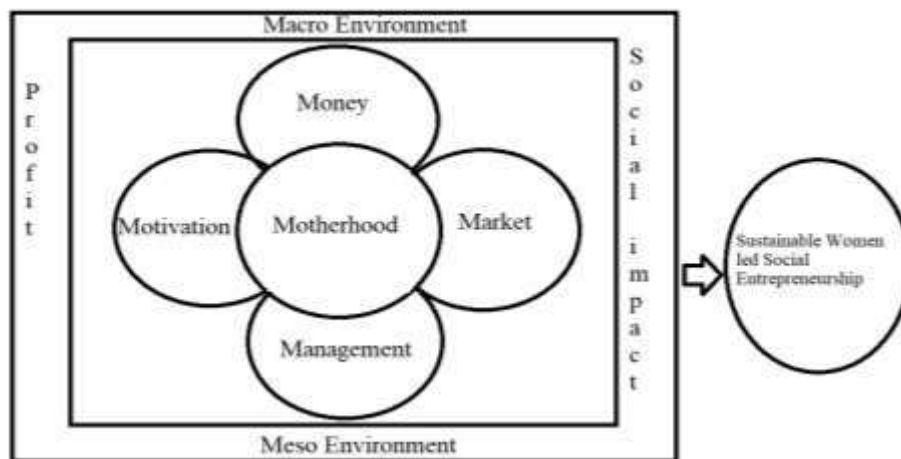
The Role of Social Enterprises in Empowerment: Women's participation in social entrepreneurship in India is frequently associated with empowerment, both on an individual and community level. According to studies, women entrepreneurs, particularly those involved in social enterprises, help to shape society by challenging traditional gender roles and creating more inclusive economic systems.

Policy and Support Systems: Several studies highlight the role of government policies, non-governmental organisations

(NGOs), and private sector initiatives in empowering women social entrepreneurs in India. Programs that promote women's financial inclusion, skill development, and entrepreneurial education are critical for creating an enabling environment.

Regional Focus: According to research, social entrepreneurship among Indian women is particularly strong in states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. These areas have seen targeted interventions to help women entrepreneurs through microfinance institutions (MFIs), self-help groups (SHGs), and rural development programs (British Council, 2020).

Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Framework of the Factors that Determine the Growth of Female-Owned Social Enterprises



Source: Authors' idea based on Brush, Bruin, & Welter, (2009) and existing literature

The above figure describes how 7 Ms contribute for women enterprises whereas, the hybrid module of profit and social impact can sustain women enterprises with address social issues such as poverty,

unemployment, ecological protection so.on... Conflicting perspectives exist on how the 6 Ms are intertwined (Berger & Kuckertz, 2016; Brush et al., 2009; Munkejord, 2017; Wang, 2019). Thus, it is difficult to reach a preliminary

conclusion about how the 6 Ms interact to influence the growth of female-owned businesses. Hence we need to add motivation to drive the business and social impact for a cause, so that we can bring sustainable changes in society.

Motherhood describes the impact of the household context, which frequently has a greater influence on female-owned businesses than on male-owned businesses (Gibard & Chalus-Sauvannet, 2022). Although the traditional roles and responsibilities of motherhood can prevent female-owned businesses from reaching their full potential, family social capital can be an important resource for expanding their businesses' resource repertoire (Brito, Lenz, & Pacheco, 2022). The nature of the social, institutional, and spatial contexts in which female-owned social enterprises operate will determine how the meso and macro environments (professional networks/national policies and socioeconomic factors, respectively) influence their growth (Welter, 2011). These 7 Ms and blend of profit and social impact creates better women social entrepreneurship for achieving targets of sustainable development goals (SDG) 2030.

Future Research Directions

Based on our bibliometric analysis, we concluded that more research is required to quantify the social impact of women-led enterprises in India. In addition to that studies to be conducted on comparing women social entrepreneurs in India to

those in other South Asian or developing countries, looking into the role of digital tools and platforms in empowering women social entrepreneurs in rural and underserved areas of India, and evaluating the effectiveness of government policies in promoting the growth of women-led social enterprises in India.

Conclusion

A bibliometric analysis of studies on women social entrepreneurs in India will shed light on the direction of research in this field, reveal patterns in author collaborations, and identify gaps in the literature. Many studies have been conducted on issues and challenges in women's social entrepreneurship, and the summaries reflect both the significant contributions women make through social entrepreneurship in India and the persistent barriers they face in accessing resources, networks, and institutional support. Some studies have highlighted the significant contributions made by female social entrepreneurs in Karnataka, particularly in rural and socioeconomic development.

Despite their successes, they continue to face challenges in terms of resource access, institutional support, and overcoming societal stereotypes. We provide recommendations for future research on enabling and measuring the contributions of women's entrepreneurship to sustainable development, including capital investments and the long-term impacts on women-led enterprises.

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