



Research Paper

Understanding the Diverse Constraints and Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in India and the Path Ahead.

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ABSTRACT:

Women entrepreneurship plays a significant role in driving economic growth and fostering innovation in India. Despite the increasing recognition and support for women entrepreneurs, they face numerous challenges across various domains. This review paper explores the multifaceted constraints encountered by women entrepreneurs in India, categorized into five main domains: personal & social, educational & technological, financial, marketing, and infrastructural & manpower related. Personal and social constraints stem from societal expectations, cultural norms, and stereotypes, limiting women's ability to prioritize entrepreneurial pursuits. Educational and technological constraints arise from limited access to quality education and technical skills training, exacerbating the digital divide. Financial constraints hinder access to capital, with discriminatory lending practices and lack of financial literacy hindering women's ability to secure funding. Marketing constraints result from limited resources, expertise, and gender biases in advertising, while infrastructural and manpower-related constraints encompass inadequate infrastructure, transportation challenges, and gender disparities in hiring and employment. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving policy support, improved access to finance, education and training, gender-inclusive marketing practices, and enhancements in infrastructure and support systems. By overcoming these barriers, India can create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs to thrive, contributing to inclusive economic growth and gender empowerment.

Keywords: Constraints, Challenges, Women Entrepreneurs, Economic Growth And Gender Empowerment.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Worldwide, women entrepreneurs oversee more than one-third of all business endeavors. The rise of female entrepreneurship in India can be attributed to various factors such as economic advancement, increased educational accessibility, urbanization, dissemination of liberal and democratic culture, and social acceptance. In India, initiatives and incentives specific to women entrepreneurs have been developed. Programs like Standup and Startup India also highlight the need of encouraging women's entrepreneurial spirit. Globally, women entrepreneurs have become increasingly prominent and prosperous over time, receiving numerous awards for their achievements. For instance, in 2013 the American media executive, entertainer, and entrepreneur Oprah Winfrey was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in recognition of her exceptional contributions to the entertainment and social impact sectors.

Nearer to home, Indian woman entrepreneur Kiran Muzumdar Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon Limited, was recognized for her outstanding contributions to the health and medicine business with numerous prestigious corporate accolades as well as civilian honors including the Padma Bhushan (2005) and Padma Shri (1989). Prominent Indian women entrepreneurs such as Vandana Luthra, Ekta Kapoor, Naina Lal Kidwai, and others are among them.

Women entrepreneurs in India play a crucial role in driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and promoting gender equality. However, despite their contributions, they encounter numerous challenges that

hinder their entrepreneurial endeavours. This review paper aims to explore the multifaceted constraints and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India, categorized into five main domains: personal & social, educational & technological, financial, marketing, and infrastructural & manpower related.

II. PERSONAL & SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS:

In India, women entrepreneurs encounter various personal and social constraints that impede their entrepreneurial pursuits. One significant challenge arises from societal expectations and cultural norms, which often discourage women from venturing into entrepreneurial endeavours. According to Sharma (2019), these norms perpetuate traditional gender roles, placing greater emphasis on women's roles as caregivers and homemakers rather than as business leaders. As a result, women may face pressure to prioritize familial duties over their entrepreneurial aspirations, thereby limiting their ability to dedicate sufficient time and resources to their businesses.

Furthermore, societal stereotypes regarding women's capabilities and leadership skills serve as another barrier for women entrepreneurs in India. Kapur (2017) highlights how these stereotypes undermine women's confidence and credibility in the business world, creating additional hurdles for them to overcome. Such perceptions may lead to a lack of support and recognition for women-led ventures, making it challenging for female entrepreneurs to establish themselves and succeed in their respective industries.

These personal and social constraints not only hinder women entrepreneurs' access to opportunities but also perpetuate gender inequality within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to challenge traditional gender norms, provide support systems tailored to women entrepreneurs' needs, and promote inclusive policies that foster gender equality in entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurs face a myriad of personal and social constraints that hinder their entrepreneurial journey. Some of these constraints include:

- I. **Societal Expectations:** In many societies, including India, there are entrenched expectations regarding women's roles as caregivers and homemakers. These societal norms often prioritize domestic responsibilities over career pursuits, making it challenging for women to prioritize their entrepreneurial aspirations (Sharma, 2019).
- II. **Cultural Norms:** Cultural norms can also play a significant role in limiting women's participation in entrepreneurship. For example, in some cultures, there may be stigma associated with women working outside the home or engaging in traditionally male-dominated industries, which can discourage women from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures (Kapur, 2017).
- III. **Limited Access to Resources:** Women entrepreneurs often face barriers in accessing financial resources, such as loans and investment capital, due to factors such as gender bias in the financial sector and discriminatory lending practices (Sharma, 2019).
- IV. **Lack of Support Networks:** Women may also encounter challenges in accessing supportive networks and mentorship opportunities, which are crucial for entrepreneurial success. Male-dominated networks may be less inclusive or welcoming to women, making it difficult for them to access the guidance and support needed to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship (Kapur, 2017).
- V. **Stereotypes and Bias:** Stereotypes regarding women's capabilities and leadership skills can undermine women's confidence and credibility in the business world. Women entrepreneurs may face skepticism and prejudice from investors, customers, and even their own peers, which can impact their ability to grow their businesses and access opportunities (Sharma, 2019).

III .EDUCATIONAL & TECHNOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS:

Limited access to quality education and technical skills training poses a significant barrier for women entrepreneurs in India (Mahapatra & Satpathy, 2020). Many women lack the necessary educational qualifications and technological proficiency required to navigate the complexities of modern business environments. Additionally, the digital divide exacerbates the challenges for women entrepreneurs, particularly those in rural areas (Kumari & Sharma, 2018).

Educational and technological constraints present significant challenges for women entrepreneurs, limiting their ability to fully engage and thrive in entrepreneurial activities. These constraints include:

- I. **Limited Access to Education:** In many parts of the world, including developing countries, women have lower levels of access to education compared to men. This educational disparity can hinder women's ability to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to start and grow successful businesses (World Bank, 2019).
- II. **Digital Divide:** Women often face disparities in access to technology and digital resources, known as the digital divide. This gap in access to technology can impede women's ability to leverage digital tools and platforms for business development, marketing, and networking (UN Women, 2020).

- III. **Technological Literacy:** Even when women have access to technology, they may encounter challenges related to technological literacy and proficiency. Limited exposure to and training in technology can hinder women's ability to effectively utilize digital tools and adopt innovative solutions in their businesses (Dutta & Mia, 2017).
- IV. **Gender Bias in STEM Fields:** In fields related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), women often face gender bias and discrimination, which can deter them from pursuing education and careers in these fields. This bias contributes to the underrepresentation of women in STEM-related entrepreneurial ventures and innovation-driven industries (UNESCO, 2021).
- V. **Access to Funding for Tech Ventures:** Women entrepreneurs in technology-related sectors often encounter challenges in accessing funding and investment capital. Gender bias in the venture capital industry and stereotypes about women's technological capabilities can limit investment opportunities for women-led tech startups (Gompers et al., 2020).

IV. FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS:

Access to finance remains a major challenge for women entrepreneurs in India (Kumari & Sharma, 2018). Discriminatory lending practices, stringent collateral requirements, and limited financial literacy hinder their ability to secure funding for their businesses (Das & Chaudhary, 2016). Moreover, the lack of awareness about government schemes and support programs further compounds the financial challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Patra & Dash, 2019). These constraints encompass various aspects that hinder women's ability to access and utilize financial resources for their entrepreneurial endeavors. Some key financial constraints include:

- I. **Limited Access to Capital:** Women entrepreneurs often encounter difficulties in accessing capital, including loans, investment funds, and venture capital. Financial institutions and investors may exhibit gender bias, leading to unequal treatment and reduced access to funding for women-led businesses (Coleman, 2018).
- II. **Collateral Requirements:** Financial institutions often require collateral or assets to secure loans, which can pose a significant barrier for women entrepreneurs, especially in contexts where women have limited ownership or control over property. Lack of collateral can restrict women's ability to qualify for loans or secure favorable lending terms (World Bank, 2019).
- III. **Unequal Pay and Financial Resources:** Gender pay gaps and disparities in financial resources can limit women's ability to invest in their businesses or obtain startup capital. Lower levels of income and wealth accumulation among women relative to men can hinder their capacity to finance business ventures and sustain their operations (Fletcher, 2019).
- IV. **Risk Aversion and Investor Bias:** Women entrepreneurs may face challenges in securing investment due to investor bias and perceptions of women as being more risk-averse. Stereotypes and misconceptions about women's financial acumen and business leadership abilities can result in fewer investment opportunities and lower levels of financial support for women-led ventures (Brush et al., 2018).
- V. **Lack of Financial Literacy and Business Skills:** Limited financial literacy and business management skills can also impede women entrepreneurs' ability to effectively manage finances, access credit, and make strategic financial decisions. Investing in financial education and training programs can help mitigate this constraint and empower women to navigate the financial aspects of entrepreneurship (Coleman, 2018).

VI. MARKETING CONSTRAINTS:

Women entrepreneurs often encounter various marketing constraints that can impede their ability to effectively promote their businesses and reach their target audience. Women entrepreneurs often struggle with marketing their products or services effectively due to limited resources and expertise (Mahapatra & Satpathy, 2020). They may face difficulties in identifying target markets, building brand awareness, and reaching potential customers. Additionally, cultural barriers and gender biases in advertising and promotional activities can impede the marketing efforts of women entrepreneurs in India (Kapur, 2017).

Some of the key marketing constraints faced by women entrepreneurs include:

- I. **Limited Access to Networks and Channels:** Women may have limited access to established business networks and marketing channels, which are essential for reaching potential customers and expanding their market presence. Gender biases and exclusionary practices within industry networks and marketing platforms can restrict women entrepreneurs' opportunities for visibility and market access (Datta, 2019).
- II. **Stereotypes and Gender Bias in Advertising:** Gender stereotypes and biases in advertising can pose challenges for women entrepreneurs trying to create impactful marketing campaigns. Women-led businesses may encounter difficulties in portraying their products or services in a way that resonates with their target audience, as traditional advertising often reinforces gender norms and expectations (Dwivedi & Johnson, 2020).
- III. **Resource Constraints for Marketing Initiatives:** Limited financial resources and budget constraints can hinder women entrepreneurs' ability to invest in marketing initiatives and promotional activities. Women-

led businesses may struggle to allocate sufficient funds for advertising, branding, and other marketing efforts, which can affect their visibility and competitiveness in the market (Kapur, 2017).

IV. **Lack of Marketing Expertise and Skills:** Women entrepreneurs may face challenges in acquiring and leveraging marketing expertise and skills to effectively promote their businesses. Limited access to training and mentorship programs tailored to women's needs can impede their ability to develop strategic marketing plans and implement successful marketing campaigns (World Bank, 2019).

V. **Cultural and Societal Norms:** Cultural and societal norms regarding women's roles and behaviors can influence marketing strategies and messaging for women entrepreneurs. Cultural sensitivity and understanding of local norms are essential for effective marketing, but women entrepreneurs may face barriers in navigating cultural nuances and addressing diverse consumer preferences (Sharma, 2019).

VII. INFRASTRUCTURAL & MANPOWER RELATED CONSTRAINTS:

Women entrepreneurs often face infrastructural and manpower-related constraints that can hinder their business operations and growth. Inadequate infrastructure, including unreliable power supply, poor transportation networks, and limited access to industrial zones, poses significant challenges for women entrepreneurs in India (Sharma, 2019). Additionally, the shortage of skilled manpower and the lack of supportive policies for women-friendly workplaces further hinder their business operations and growth prospects (Das & Chaudhary, 2016). These constraints include:

I. **Limited Access to Physical Infrastructure:** Women entrepreneurs may encounter challenges in accessing adequate physical infrastructure, such as affordable office spaces, manufacturing facilities, or storage facilities. Lack of access to suitable infrastructure can constrain women's ability to establish and expand their businesses, particularly in industries requiring specialized facilities (World Bank, 2019).

II. **Transportation Constraints:** In many regions, women entrepreneurs face transportation constraints that impede their mobility and access to markets, suppliers, and business opportunities. Limited access to reliable transportation infrastructure can restrict women's ability to conduct business activities, attend meetings, and deliver products or services to customers (Datta, 2019).

III. **Work-Life Balance Challenges:** Balancing business responsibilities with household and caregiving duties can pose significant challenges for women entrepreneurs. Women may struggle to recruit and retain qualified employees, manage work schedules, and maintain productivity while fulfilling family obligations. This work-life balance dilemma can affect women's ability to scale their businesses and compete effectively in the market (Kapur, 2017).

IV. **Gender Disparities in Hiring and Employment:** Women entrepreneurs may face gender disparities in hiring and employment practices, both as employers and as employees. Discriminatory hiring practices, unequal pay, and limited opportunities for career advancement can hinder women's ability to attract and retain skilled manpower, thereby affecting business performance and growth (Sharma, 2019).

V. **Limited Access to Training and Skills Development:** Women entrepreneurs may encounter challenges in accessing training and skills development programs tailored to their needs. Lack of access to business management, technical, and leadership training opportunities can hinder women's ability to build the knowledge and capabilities necessary to effectively manage and grow their businesses (World Bank, 2019).

VIII. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Confronting the various challenges faced by women entrepreneurs requires a multifaceted approach that addresses structural, societal, and individual barriers. Here are some suggestions and recommendations:

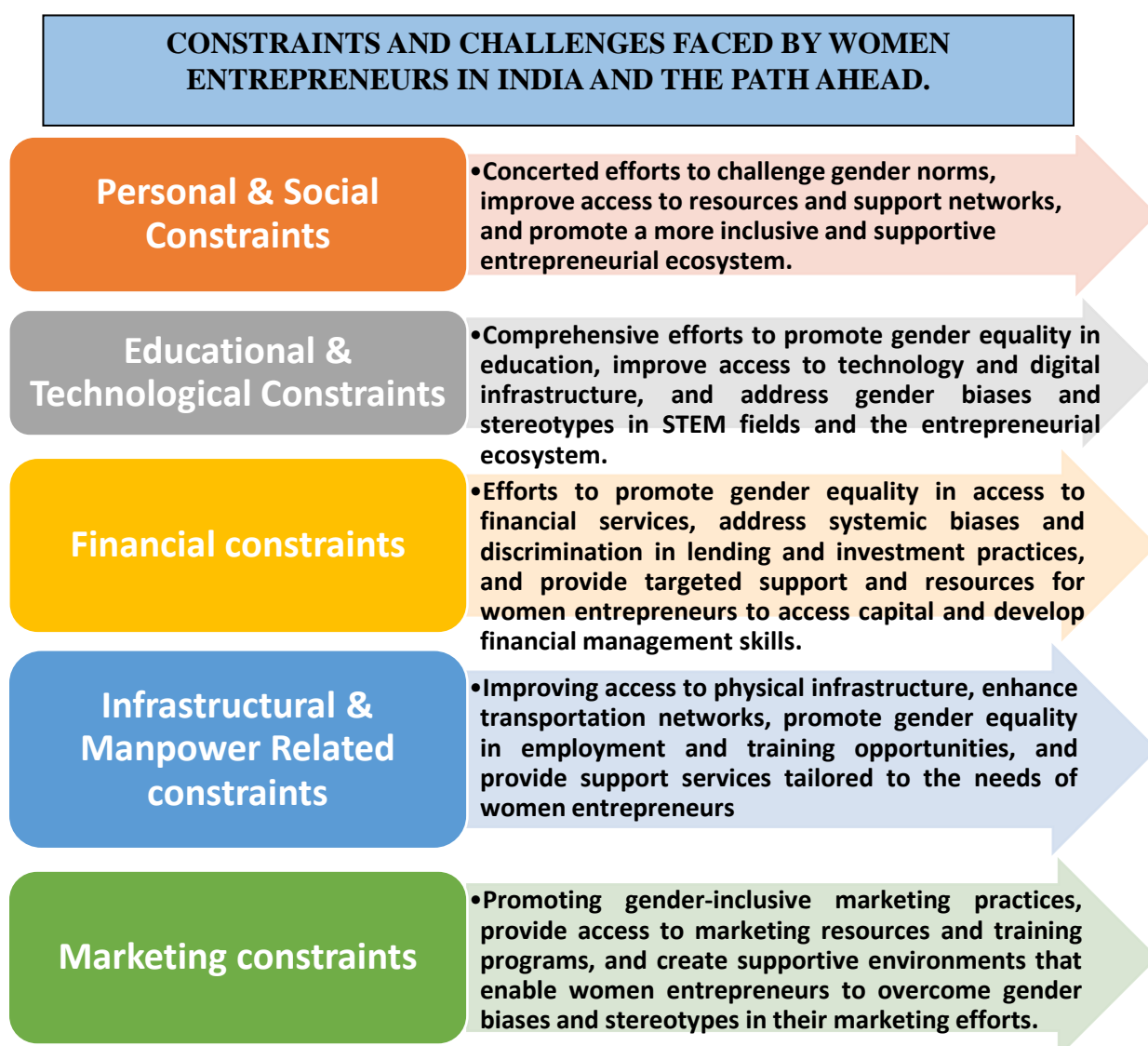
I. **Policy Support:** Governments and policymakers should enact and enforce policies that promote gender equality and support women's entrepreneurship. This includes implementing gender-sensitive regulations, providing financial incentives for women-owned businesses, and establishing support mechanisms such as business incubators and accelerators specifically tailored to women entrepreneurs.

II. **Access to Finance:** Efforts should be made to improve women's access to financial resources, including microloans, venture capital, and crowdfunding. Financial institutions and investors should be encouraged to adopt gender-sensitive lending practices and investment criteria to address biases and increase funding opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

III. **Education and Training:** Providing women entrepreneurs with access to education, training, and skills development programs is crucial for building their capabilities and confidence. This includes offering courses on business management, financial literacy, marketing, and leadership skills, as well as mentorship and networking opportunities to connect women with experienced entrepreneurs and industry professionals.

IV. **Promoting Gender-Inclusive Marketing:** Businesses and marketing agencies should work to challenge gender stereotypes and biases in advertising and marketing campaigns. Embracing diversity and inclusivity in marketing strategies can help women entrepreneurs effectively reach and engage diverse audiences while challenging harmful stereotypes about women's roles and capabilities.

- V. **Creating Supportive Ecosystems:** Building supportive ecosystems that foster collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing among women entrepreneurs is essential. This includes establishing women-focused business associations, networking groups, and online communities where women can access resources, share experiences, and support one another in overcoming challenges.
- VI. **Addressing Cultural and Social Norms:** Efforts to challenge and change cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality are critical. This involves promoting awareness and education about gender biases, advocating for women's rights and empowerment, and encouraging positive representations of women in leadership and entrepreneurship in media and society.
- VII. **Improving Access to Infrastructure and Resources:** Governments and stakeholders should invest in improving access to physical infrastructure, transportation networks, and technology resources that are essential for women entrepreneurs to operate and grow their businesses. This includes expanding access to affordable workspace, reliable transportation, and digital connectivity in both urban and rural areas. By implementing these recommendations and fostering an environment that supports and empowers women entrepreneurs, we can overcome the challenges they face and unlock the full potential of women's entrepreneurship for economic growth and social development.



IX. CONCLUSION:

Women entrepreneurs in India confront a myriad of constraints and challenges across various domains, ranging from personal and social to infrastructural and manpower related issues. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from policymakers, educational institutions, financial institutions, and other stakeholders. By implementing targeted interventions and supportive policies, India can create a more conducive

environment for women entrepreneurs to thrive, thereby contributing to inclusive economic growth and gender empowerment.

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