

The Alchemic Spark: Self-Help Organizations as Angel Investors for Rising Women Entrepreneurs

Abstract

The study looks at how women might be able to get past psychological and social obstacles that might be preventing them from starting or maintaining their own businesses. By looking at ways to boost their involvement, the study focuses on the contribution that female entrepreneurs make to the nation's economic growth. 44 research papers, research reports, media reports, and reports from other agencies are systematically analyzed in this study. It includes information on all facets of women's entrepreneurship as well as policies and practices. Qualitative models and knowledge were derived through thematic ontological analysis. There are various constraining factors, including social expectations, psychological insecurities, and poorly developed access to finance/resources, that are hindering the growth of female entrepreneurship. Though there is improvement in government programs and policies, issues of implementation remain. Indian women entrepreneurship lags behind the global standards and lags behind their male counterparts in the country.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Small SHG, Angel Investors, Social And Psychological Barriers, Government Policies.

1. Introduction

Despite some economic growth in these regions and various community projects aimed at addressing these issues, there has been limited success in reducing poverty, abolishing social discrimination, and promoting women's employment in rural areas overall. The lack of jobs among resource-rural dwellers has led to a dire situation, and for them, bread and butter remain a distant dream. Empowering and supporting women who aspire to be entrepreneurs in society may be the most effective approach for enabling the growth and self-sufficiency of women living in suburban, rural, or coastal regions. It can be said that initiatives like Ruma Devi of Rajasthan gave the confidence to the authors of this study to check whether the formula (Women SHG) of the state in the country is capable enough to bring significant social development changes in the present society and fulfill the unfinished development

needs. Entrepreneurship involves combining the factors of production. The nature of entrepreneurialism is fresh. Hence, entrepreneurs employ various innovative strategies and tactics, such as enhancing their competitive advantage, accelerating growth, creating jobs and wealth, optimizing organizational policies, and motivating employees to reach their full potential. In other words, no definition or interpretation can justify the charismatic ability of a woman, and a significant economic gap persists, especially in rural or coastal areas of the country.

“Wives are the romantic lovers of young men, the sympathetic helpmeets of the midlife man, and the nursing mothers of old men.” Francis Bacon best described the role and importance of a woman. However, it is a very grievous matter that that which she sacrifices, she does not receive. Despite 75 years of independence, in the land of Sarojini Naidu and Savitribai Phule, rural women, particularly those from coastal and tribal communities, remain isolated from the country's urban development. Entrepreneurs establish new businesses, which in turn enhance the economic system by creating jobs, increasing competition, and potentially boosting productivity through technological innovations. Therefore, high quantifiable entrepreneurship levels are expected to yield high rates of economic growth. In other words, in India, half the human resource potential available to any business, across all sectors of the economy, is women. Suppose this half of the population is ignored and deprived of the opportunities provided by the tertiary, industrial, and agricultural sectors. In that case, development is impossible. The women of today represent a dynamic part of the population, involved in diverse activities and performing various kinds of work, while also assisting men in every way possible. However, they face many barriers as they continue their career path for admission. The key challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in India are diverse- they include me) the prejudicial social, economic, and cultural structure of Indian communities ii) unfair treatment iii) a lack of social acceptance iv) a decrease in support and inspiration v) responsibilities towards the family vi) unseen contributions, referring to the fact that what is perceived, is not acknowledged, and vii) traditional Indian social attitude that does not value a women's independence, and are especially prevalent in rural contexts (Sirisha, 2021).

Through the self-help group (SHG), a committee of 10 to 20 local women becomes a financial hub in the community. Members pay small amounts of savings over time for several months until they have enough funds to enable the organization to begin lending. After that, the money is available for both community members and non-members to borrow and use as

they see fit. In India, many Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are "linked" with financial institutions to provide micro-credit. SHGs have also been enabled by banks to obtain direct funding via the SHGs channel. Microfinance is a type of alternative funding platform that provides revenue to small business owners and entrepreneurs who lack access to formal financial institutions (Pratap Singh, 2021a). One effective way to promote social and economic development is to support local women entrepreneurs. Read More About Research Topics: This study aims to provide insights into the role of self-help groups (SHGs) in empowering women by examining a commonly practiced approach to women's entrepreneurship through SHGs. Therefore, it is essential to measure the growth of SHGs and how women-led enterprises contribute to the country's expansion & development (Niki Kyriakidou, 2015).

With the promise and reality of equal opportunities and equal rights legislation in the workplace and education, women's entrepreneurship is thriving. However, government development programs have mostly favored urban middle-class women, failing to reach many others. As women constitute nearly 45% of the population in India, there is a need for more effective measures to provide entrepreneurial exposure and training for women worldwide (Goyal & Jai Parkash, 2011a). Microfinance is a method of economic advancement that promotes the principles of self-improvement and poverty alleviation through financial markets for low-income individuals. Women entrepreneurs in India face numerous challenges when attempting to advance their careers. Social, economic, organizational, production, marketing, and psychological reproductive challenges. Some of the key challenges have included social and cultural systems that marginalize women, a lack of social acceptance, opposition to their work, a lack of encouragement, and family responsibilities. Women's independence is frequently seen as useless in rural areas due to traditional attitudes, and their contributions are often overlooked.

This study looks at the role that Self-Help Groups (SHGs) play in improving the lives of women entrepreneurs in rural coastal areas of India. The goal here is to comprehend how SHGs, acting as angel investors, assist women in India in overcoming financial obstacles when establishing microbusinesses. This study employs a combination of secondary data from a literature review and primary data collected from interviews and observation. The study's findings are based on previous scholarship though the authors interact and build upon such studies within context to their fieldwork location. It illustrates the evolution of SHGs in supporting women's entrepreneurial development and the financial hurdles faced by rural

women entrepreneurs, which remain another significant barrier, alongside social hurdles. This leads to the following research question to address in this paper:

RQ1. Explain how being a member of SHGs solves the problem of funding and financial competence for a small business startup of a woman living in coastal and rural sections of a country

RQ2 Why are SHGs able to make rural women financially, socially, and psychologically independent?

RQ3. Formation of SHGs and the extent of acceptance and awareness about its demand-based lending among women.

This study aims to investigate the entrepreneurial intentions of women and the role of financial independence in starting home-based micro-enterprises. We surveyed a sample of 150 women in Barasat, Diamond Harbour, and Haldia, West Bengal, India, to determine the level of awareness and willingness to join available Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The research also examined the drivers of aspiring female entrepreneurs and identified common traits that they share. The findings contribute to the literature on enhancing the entrepreneurial atmosphere and increasing awareness of commercial opportunities, which could empower and contribute to women's income in the local area.

2. Literature Review

The investigation clarifies the role of SHGs as a means for women's empowerment in India and explores their connection to social entrepreneurship. SHGs are one of the most prevalent forms of social entrepreneurship in the country; therefore, we believe it is essential to examine the growth and viability of SHGs in promoting positive change in the lives of local communities. Women's entrepreneurship urgently needs to be reignited, in terms of education, awareness of business opportunities, and the realization of their actual value and potential. It can lead to creating a whole part of society and the entire economy.

Self-help groups are small, focus-based, community-driven collectives of people with similar needs, often residing in rural or less-developed areas, who band together to save money and support each other financially. They jointly decide on savings and lending activities in these

groups, including the amounts and terms of loans, interest rates, repayment schedules, and the purposes of the loans. At a higher level, SHGs have positively impacted several socio-economic aspects, including nutrition, health, and domestic violence, to achieve economic and social progress. Primarily, women-led SHGs serve as a backbone for their members, helping them start new small businesses or enterprises, in addition to providing cultivation courses. They nurture savings and banking literacy, serving as informal financial committees that help meet local needs, such as marriage expenses, healthcare, or funding new enterprises, often comprising 15 to 25 women at a time. The most common form of SHG is found in the countryside, but they are also present throughout India. As stated by Down to Earth, India has 12 million SHGs, out of which, women run 9 million. Typically, each group comprises 20-25 microentrepreneurs from rural villages who collaborate to benefit their communities.

The economic independence of women still remains limited, particularly in rural areas and in those families with low levels of education. In these households, primary members are unable to make decisions about entrepreneurial activities without the consent of family members and adherence to established social norms and conventions. Although policy-level property rights exist for women in India, there is still a large disparity since most women are unaware of or unable to access these rights. SHGs have played a crucial role in restoring the dignity and respect of women in India. Few women are aware of these provisions unless family quarrels compel them to confront the issue. Even then, most do not fully enjoy their property rights. Women, especially in rural areas, are treated as second-class citizens, which keeps them trapped in the cycle of poverty. Their fear of failure, combined with the lack of support from their families and society, holds them back from achieving their entrepreneurial greatness. Women are discouraged from pursuing business opportunities by families and communities, therefore being mentally and economically dependent. Security is often easily achieved for Indian women, and unnecessarily limiting their self-confidence is not their goal (Goyal & Jai Parkash, 2011b). Hence, to change the situation, the family and society must encourage these women and build their confidence. Perspective, skill set, and mindset are the many reasons; poverty and illiteracy are the few reasons why women are less participatory in professional and entrepreneurial fields. Widespread access to formal education and training significantly alters this narrative, enabling women to achieve greater independence and prosperity.

With their efforts, SHGs have made women visible and part of their households and society. They arrived with a saving culture, and women's socioeconomic status was enhanced through

their participation in these SHGs. Now, thanks to these groups, Women are being involved in significant family or societal decisions. So, SHGs have emerged as an effective tool for empowerment of women (Kurian & John, n.d.). Banks and financial institutions in the developing world are generally a major source of funding for entrepreneurs (as small and medium-sized enterprises generally have limited access to the capital markets). However, these institutions are generally not keen to serve women entrepreneurs as their right customers and therefore do not provide them with access to the credit system. Similarly, the SHG-BANK Linkage Programme, being a microfinance initiative, has been a blessing for poverty alleviation and standards of living of rural masses in a study in West Bengal. Commercial banks, rural rural banks (RRBs), and cooperative banks have extended loans to self-help groups (SHGs) and microfinance institutions (MFIs), but still face difficulties in recovering the loans. SHGs give confidence and economic security to women to achieve success and help establish a better and more balanced society by empowering rural as well as urban women. Pratap Singh (2021b) noted that a central feature of SHGs is their linked microfinance, which is a key driver in reducing poverty and rural development. Kabeer noted that financial access can enhance poor women and their families' social and economic wellbeing but not necessarily women's empowerment.

Although initiation of self-help groups (SHGs) and credit schemes through subsidies, i.e., SGSY, and other anti-poverty interventions are pragmatic measures in this direction, poverty alleviation measures one-sided in nature are not enough or efficient to empower poor rural women (South & Kabeer, 2005). They must receive proper training to use credit properly in their enterprises. Educating them in this way is the only way through which they can indeed be empowered and achieve economic independence. They can complement the efforts of the Government to make the SHG programs more robust. Micro-credit will not suffice to provide skills and training to the SHG members in a manner that can assist them with awareness, autonomy, and financial autonomy (Banerjee (Chatterjee) & Ghosh, 2012). The SHG movement has played a significant role in rural development over the past three decades. SHGs have been the back-bone of poverty eradication through their organizational work with the support of the government and NGOs. Savings and credit as a financial mechanism have had a direct bearing at the grassroots level. SHGs have engaged in microfinance operations, collaborated with the state in poverty-reduction initiatives, and operated small-scale businesses for poor sections (Sarkar & Chandra Malik, 2019). However, women entrepreneurship is also necessity-driven and many vulnerable businesses ensue.

Data through October 2023. Economic Census (EC) analysis demonstrates that women's long-term entrepreneurship has declined. However, both the total of women-owned firms and that of no-hired worker firms have increased. This bears witness to both the precariousness of the majority of women-owned firms and to the necessity to help them on terms befitting their special circumstances. Lower entrepreneurial activity among socially disadvantaged groups like SCs, STs, and OBCs can be seen in states. Problems in this domain have been the severe lack of availability of access to government finance, and individuals relying on their own resources to fund. The transition of women's entrepreneurial activity away from agriculture towards services is opening up new opportunities, as well as the necessity for upgradation of skills and easier access to money. In order to achieve gender equality and increase female labor force participation, it is imperative that women, especially those from marginalized groups, be empowered to pursue entrepreneurship. The economy and GDP would benefit greatly if women entrepreneurs were successful. Even though the government has taken steps to increase institutional credit, the unique vulnerabilities faced by women from different social groups must be addressed. Women's economic empowerment is also hampered by ignorance of government assistance programs. To support women's entrepreneurship and achieve sustainable development, this gap must be closed (Samant Roy & Tomar, 2018). The High-Level Committee Report on the Status of Women, released in 2015, acknowledges the success of the microfinance movement.

But it emphasizes the need for mainstreaming women into the financial system. The report also suggests inclusion of women's self-help groups (SHGs) in the priority sector so that they can obtain credit at subsidized rates. But it emphasizes the need for further steps towards improving women's access to credit. Public policy must spur women entrepreneurship through gender-neutral legal frameworks, reduction in bureaucratic hurdles, access equality to financial assets, and support in the form of financial literacy programs, training, counselling, and stronger networks (High-Level Committee on the Status of Women, 2015). Patriarchy rules Indian society as well as Indian families, and males have a deciding hand in every decision at the economic, political, religious, and social planes.

This widespread and entrenched patriarchal structure has existed for centuries, restricting the rights of women and enabling deleterious customs to develop, such as child marriage, dowry, honor killings, witch hunts, and sex-selective gender-biased practices. These ACES perpetuate structural vulnerability and inequality among women and girls in Indian society

(High-Level Committee on the Status of Women, 2015). The Ministry of Women and Child Development's Working Group on Empowerment of Women (2015) report recommends:

- *Tax and financial incentives should promote women-owned businesses in sectors where poor women are working but not entering (school education, health care, sanitation, agriculture, employment, etc).*
- *Gender empowerment, capacity building, and skill development programs must be addressed through CSR activities.*
- *Tax allowances need to be provided to businesses that employ a higher number of women, particularly rural women.*

According to MC Minimol (2011), in a study of entrepreneurial ability among women micro-entrepreneurs in Kerala's coastal regions, significant variations were observed between SHG members and non-members.

Similarly, it concluded that entrepreneurship training in SHGs encouraged training for entrepreneurial orientation, which is business spirit (Minimol, 2020). However, SHGs have not been able to support women entrepreneurs in the pandemic times to a satisfactory level. Studies such as those conducted by Fazalbhoy & Gochhait (2022) prove that SHGs cannot provide women entrepreneurship market growth, infrastructure upgrade, and technology empowerment, which are essential inputs for women's entrepreneurship. These issues, brought to prominence by McGee et al. (1995), Merz and Sauber (1995), Ilavarasan and Levy (2010), Van De Ven 1984), Gill et al., and Jensen and Oster (2009), as of data through October 2023, are very important for the growth of business. This need for business growth was not fulfilled by SHGs, as determined by survey data from recent times. Suchitra and Bishnoi (2019) and Poornima and Ramanaiah (2019) findings also reinforce the fact that the SHGs generally do not contribute towards improving business growth and development. Although SHGs are held accountable for encouraging the empowerment of women and creating their entrepreneurial capabilities, in case they are devoid of proper financial support as well as infrastructural assistance, then women entrepreneurs could undergo downgradation in development. The value of self-help groups (SHGs) in promoting women's entrepreneurship in developing countries has a patchy track record, as in a study in Nepal.

Comparing female SHG members and female members of the no-SHG (Financial disabilities) group can help better understand the empowerment of SHG members. In spite of being

dissimilar in most ways, the two groups have a number of similarities regarding the issues and objectives they encounter. Women with disabilities: on connecting SHGs to the labor market; non-disabled women: on production and credit. All SHGs initially aim to empower women economically. It highlights the intersectionality of gender and disability. It explicitly states that all women, whether able-bodied or disabled, must come together and struggle against discrimination in society and face the social forces that reduce them to outsiders. Another target is also to expand the inclusion of other WWDs in SHGs and ensure their sustainability so that they can optimize the returns from these groups (Dhungana & Kusakabe, 2010).

Research on various watershed programs reveals that existing government delivery mechanisms have been ineffective in facilitating effective participation and equitable sharing of benefits. Government guidelines for watersheds emphasize the importance of NGOs that possess the necessary expertise, flexibility, and institutional framework to establish participatory institutions. This has become a priority for empowering women and including marginalized groups in watershed management efforts, particularly those involving self-help groups (SHGs). However, more specific provisions regarding the role of SHGs in decision-making related to watershed programs are lacking. Although SHGs are beneficial for both the rural economy and the households, the question of group size remains problematic (Shaikh Khatibi & Indira, n.d.). Group of SHGs working with SHGs and right networks, where a collection of 10-20 SHGs become drivers of social and economic change for creating dignified work opportunities for women in every community. It is individual and collective empowerment that impinges not only on their families and communities (Brogan & Dooley, 2024) but even on the motivation and determinants of potential female entrepreneurs. A game of numbers, economic literacy was discovered to be a critical ingredient in nurturing entrepreneurial spirit among residents. Entrepreneurial behavior results from the interaction between cognition capabilities, personal determinants, and environmental determinants. The findings show that basic numeracy and money skills, and more importantly their combination with entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), are good predictors of encouraging women to establish new firms. Concurrently, relational capital and positive social influences will help mitigate risk aversion, a major barrier for most potential women entrepreneurs. People begin new businesses for various reasons, including freedom, social change, or economic need. The study creates distinguishable profiles of would-be entrepreneurs within the sample and theorizes that higher-order financial capabilities increase women's sensitivity to business

opportunity. Such increased awareness enables women to earn higher incomes and achieve higher levels of independence (Llados-Maslorens & Ruiz-Dotras, 2022).

Home-based micro-entrepreneurship is one of the platforms on which women in developing countries can improve their lives since it creates opportunities for employment and earning, particularly among poorer communities. In a recent study, the significance of women's participation in home-based economic activities in empowering them is examined with the socio-cultural context of the handloom sector in Assam as a case study. This research examines rural women empowerment in terms of their participation in commercial handloom cluster weaving. It further identifies the regional variation in empowerment factors in the state. Economically active, women lack or have minimal control over family resources and income and remain subordinated compared to men and victims of domestic violence (Hazarika & Goswami, 2016). One such model, which has proved useful in the microfinance sector, is the self-help group (SHG) and is bringing about a revolution in the life of women, both rural and urban. These groups empower women to become financially independent, and they do so because they bring huge value to society as a whole. SHG-Bank linkage has vast potential to reinforce the financial autonomy of the weaker section women. Group corpus and savings enable the women in a family from being passive to active and, in the process, prepare them for future participation in public decision-making bodies. The findings of the research show that SHGs have significantly increased women's decision-making authority as individuals and as a group with their husbands, while structural interventions that elicit normative changes like access to credit, political participation in ratio to equal education will not necessarily enhance the decision-making authority of women (Hazarika & Goswami, 2016).

The research also contributes new insights into the enablers and barriers that women social entrepreneurs face in BoP markets. While male entrepreneurs tend to be motivated by external incentives, such as financial gain, women tend to follow their passion for social causes with which they are connected. Hence, personal networks and family support become key factors in success, especially for BoP women who face challenges navigating administrative barriers in their respective ecosystems and are unable to access institutional credit available through traditional channels. Revenue streams and channels of delivery are more important to the women entrepreneurs entering the emerging market than product development. This seems quite striking, considering that BoP societies are faced with access

as one of the leading challenges. In fact, according to previous research, such as the studies by Lindvert et al. (2017), working to establish contact with local communities and accessing effective channels of distribution has always shown a positive correlation with the success of a business venture. It is through this that they discover creative and disruptive ways in which female entrepreneurs break through systemic barriers to create social change.

Women business leaders create local ecosystems, fostering social advancement and exchanging value at the organizational, sector, and societal levels. Network cooperation was found to be the most important for such success stories, corroborating prior studies by Moreira et al. (2019) and Bruin et al. (2007). It also assesses the impact of women's entrepreneurship on poverty, focusing on community members' participations in cast-in manufacturing at different stages of the value chain, an established driver of socio-economic advancement in impoverished areas (George et al., 2012; Knorninga et al., 2016). Here, the works of women entrepreneurs the incorporation of gender balanced strategies during the opportunity exploitation phase stands out. These include running training and education programs, job creation, and capacity building for local systems. Also it reports that at the product development stage Base of the Pyramid (BoP) consumers are left out. Women entrepreneurs do this -- many use a top down approach which leaves very few opportunities for BoP consumers' input. Also we see that although there is an attempt at inclusion in these businesses BoP consumers' presence is very low which Heeks et al. (2014) account for. This brings into question the existence of a 'glass ceiling' for women social entrepreneurs and calls for more in depth scholarly research.

Women in business also are key players in modernization through use of tech, growing investment, access to export markets, and job creation. Women entrepreneurs are also a great source of inspiration for the up and coming women in the structured and unstructured sectors. In the case of women entrepreneurs from nuclear families we see greater social, economic, and total empowerment than those from joint families. Women in the nuclear family report to get more financial and emotional support from the immediate family which in turn leads to greater social, economic and total empowerment. Research provides some insight into university students who are female entrepreneurs, again showing the importance of cash flow, problem solving, and numeracy for building entrepreneurial spirit. Embedding cash flow management into the school program can make a whole lot of difference. Entrepreneurial intentions are largely shaped by a keen interplay of cognitive abilities, personality, and social

elements. Autonomy, social impact, and economic need are some of the possible motivators, but the existence of cash flow literacy and social capital strengthens ties with aversion to risk, arguably the most pressing challenge to women entrepreneurs.

The book serves as a guide for educators, scholars, social activists, governments, institutions, and empowerment movements in empowering women through co-operatives. Co-ops ensure decent work, community building, and create economic opportunities. The empowerment accrued from such schemes is passed on to their families and communities in exchange. This study offers practical alternate entrepreneurial models beyond the employment creation view and are of particular relevance in many industries.

3. Research Methodology

The paper "SHG as an Angel Investor for Women Entrepreneurs: An Analytical Study of the Coastal Demographics of West Bengal, India" employed a multi-method research approach to describe the changing role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in women's entrepreneurship. A systematic literature review was conducted, and 44 studies, media reports, and institutional reports were consolidated to develop a theory building framework and identify existing research gaps. In tune with this, qualitative research was conducted based on the assistance of thematic ontological analysis to reveal a rich analytical framework that encompasses complex interrelationships between SHGs, financing agencies, and women entrepreneurs. Primary data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire survey administered to nearly 300 women respondents across West Bengal's coastal districts to get detailed information on entrepreneurial experiences, problems, and support groups. The present study tried to seek gaps and hindrances in favoring women's entrepreneurship and converging appropriate concepts, government policies, and grassroots practices. The results discovered issues such as low financial literacy among women entrepreneurs, poor institutional credit accessibility, and socio-cultural limitations that raise the imperative of continuous study and intervention. All in all, the research is of considerable practical and policy importance because it advocates for increased research and strategic efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship, especially in rural and underdeveloped regions of India.

Table 1. Questions asked before and after joining SHG

Question	Before Joining SHG (%)	After Joining SHG (%)
1. What is your primary source of funding for your business?	Family: 50%	SHG loans: 50%
2. How has joining an SHG improved your financial situation?	Moderately improved: 25%	Significantly improved: 40%
3. How confident are you about managing your business finances now?	Not confident at all: 30%	Very confident: 35%
4. How often do you attend SHG meetings or training sessions?	Rarely: 50%	Frequently: 50%
5. Has SHG membership improved your entrepreneurial skills?	Somewhat: 30%	Significantly: 30%
6. How supportive is your family towards your business now?	Somewhat supportive: 40%	Fully supportive: 40%
7. How do you perceive societal acceptance of women entrepreneurs now?	Rarely accepted: 40%	Somewhat accepted: 50%
8. What type of business are you involved in post-SHG membership?	Retail or trade: 35%	Retail or trade: 35%
9. How easy is it to secure a loan through SHGs?	Difficult: 40%	Very easy: 30%
10. Do you save regularly as part of SHG activities?	Rarely: 40%	Consistently: 40%
11. How has SHG membership impacted your social status in the community?	Moderately improved: 30%	Significantly improved: 35%
12. How often do you seek advice from SHG members for your business?	Rarely: 45%	Frequently: 45%
13. How aware are you of government schemes for women entrepreneurs?	Somewhat aware: 35%	Somewhat aware: 40%
14. What are the main benefits of SHG membership for your business?	Access to funds: 40%	All of the above: 40%
15. Would you recommend SHG membership to other women entrepreneurs?	Yes, strongly recommend: 30%	Yes, strongly recommend: 50%

4. Analysis and Interpretation

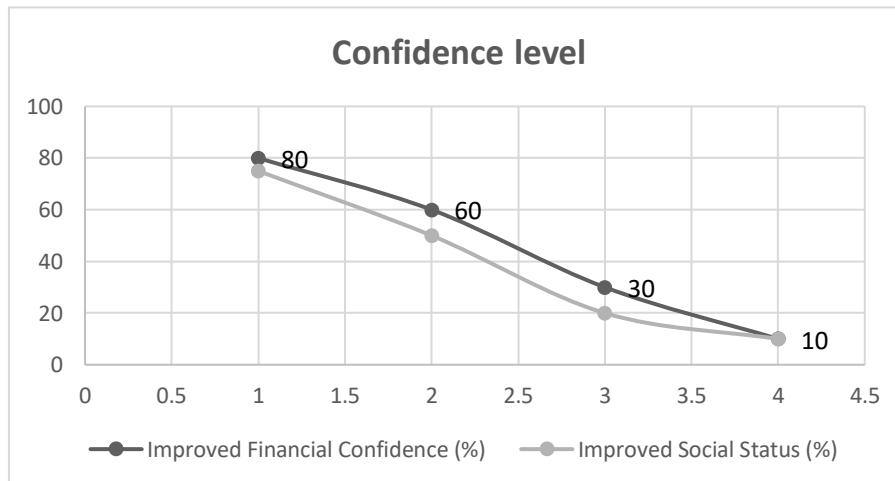


Figure 1: Confidence Level of Women Entrepreneurs

The trend of the "Confidence level" graph (Figure 1), derived from the research work "SHG as an angel investor for women entrepreneurs: An analytical study of the coastal demographics of West Bengal, India," indicates a dramatic drop in percentage of women entrepreneurs reporting an uplift in both Financial Confidence and Social Status as they move through the four categories (presumably stages of experience or activity with the SHG). Enhanced Financial Self-Efficacy starts at a very high level of 80% in the first category, suggesting that the SHG provides a rapid and strong initial boost. Nevertheless, it declines dramatically to 60% in Category 2, to 30% in Category 3, and to its lowest at 10% in the last category. Better Social Status tracks a similar but slightly lower trend, initially at around 75% before steadily falling and meeting Financial Confidence at 10% in the final category. This steep downward trend indicates that while the initial support by SHGs has a strong and

immediate effect on confidence building, the proportion of women showing consistent or aggregate improvement declines with higher entrepreneurial maturity or involvement, indicating that the continued maintenance of such gains or establishment of incremental improvements becomes increasingly complicated in the years ahead.

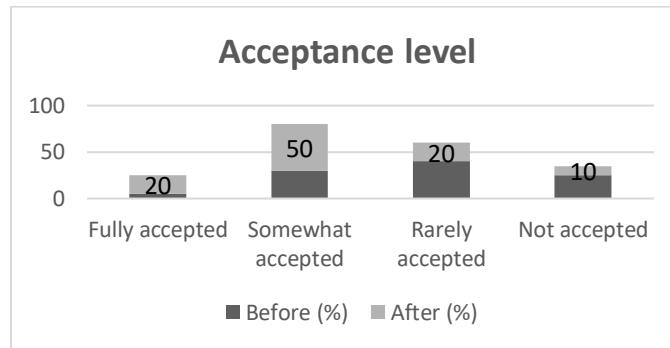


Figure 2: Perceived Societal Acceptance of Women Entrepreneurs

This bar chart, "Acceptance level" (Figure 2), indicates the perceived difference in acceptance of women entrepreneurs by West Bengal's coastal population before and after exposure to the SHG (Self-Help Group) program. The data, represented on a stacked bar chart, reflects clearly demarcated increased levels of acceptance. The response regarding females who felt "Fully accepted" increased from 0% (before SHG, as depicted by the absence of the dark gray "Before" section) to 20% after joining SHG, as represented by the light gray "After" section. In addition, the proportion of those reporting being "Somewhat accepted" rose considerably from around 30% before the SHG intervention to a total of 50% after the SHG. On the other hand, negative perception categories decreased: the "Rarely accepted" percentage fell from around 40% prior to a combined 20% later, and those who were "Not accepted" also fell by about 25% prior to a combined 10% later. In general, the visual data clearly indicate that SHG participation functions as a catalyst, having a powerful strengthening effect on the belief that women are accepted by society as businesspeople, pushing them out of the "not accepted" and "rarely accepted" groups and into the "fully accepted" and "somewhat accepted" levels.

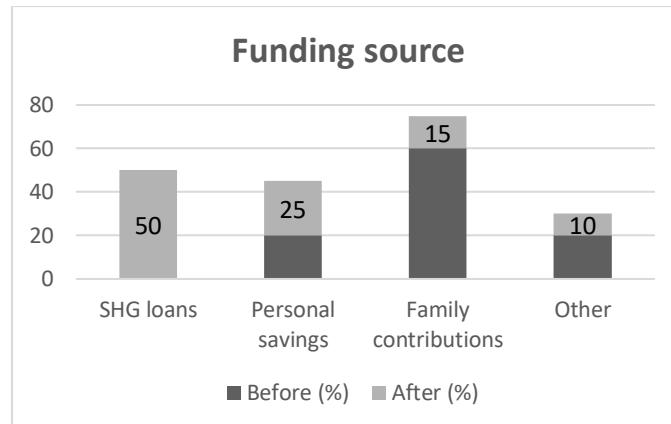


Figure 3: Funding Sources Before and After Joining SHGs

The graph captioned "Funding source" (Figure 3) illustrates the significant shift in the sources of finance for women entrepreneurs before and after they joined Self-Help Groups (SHGs) from the coastal population of West Bengal. Figures clearly indicate that SHG loans are the major source of capital after intervention, accounting for 50% of the reported funds, a source that was previously unavailable before the members joined. This rise is accompanied by a sharp decline in the use of conventional, non-institutional sources. Usage of "Family contributions" falls from 60% before the SHG to just 15% afterward, reflecting a major shift toward economic independence from the family as a whole. Second, although "Personal savings" remains a steady source, increasing marginally from 20% prior to a combined contribution of 25%, usage of "Other" unknown fund sources declines from 20% prior to 10% subsequently. This fact validates the first-order nature of SHGs in operating as an "angel investor", replacing high-dependency finance from kin and non-institutional "Other" lenders with available, structured SHG micro-loans.

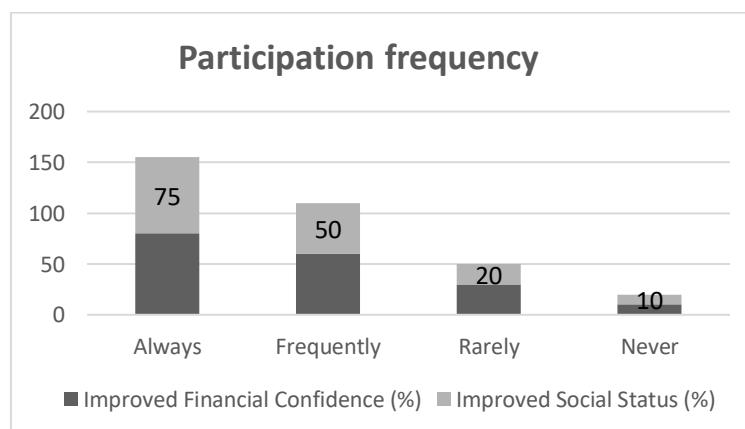


Figure 4: SHG Participation Frequency and Outcomes

The "Participation frequency" graph (Figure 4) visually illustrates a robust, positive relationship between the frequency at which women entrepreneurs engage with SHG activities and the resulting boost in their Financial Confidence and Social Status. All the largest reported increases are in the "Always" participation category, whose sum of improvement equates to 75% (divided between roughly 35-40% in Financial Confidence and 35-40% further in Social Status, though the precise division is visually complicated). This very strong outcome extends to the "Frequently" category, which also has a combined increase of 50%. By contrast, the positive effects are much smaller for those whose participation level is only "Rarely" (overall improvement of 20%), and even zero for participants who had "Never" participated in the SHG (overall improvement of just 10%). This also supports one of the most intriguing findings from this study: that it is not just a matter of access to capital that places the SHG organization at the center but, more precisely, that simple routine participation through regular meeting attendance, discussion, and peer support is the most significant driver for entrepreneurs' financial capability and perceived reputation within the community.

5. Findings

Government Initiatives: The government of India has taken various policy initiatives and schemes to promote women entrepreneurship, as they are significant contributors to the economic development of the country. These initiatives include:

NRLM/Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana: This program aims to enhance the livelihoods of rural women by offering financial support and facilitating skill development through community-based organizations.

MUDRA Yojana provides financial assistance to micro-businesses with an emphasis on promoting women entrepreneurs to establish small businesses through loans for income-generating activities.

Mahila E-Haat: An innovative online marketing platform between the sellers and the buyers for facilitating the women entrepreneurs and self-help groups to sell their products.

Here are a few of them: the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) by NITI Aayog. The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) has created a hub for women entrepreneurs,

providing them with access to training, funding, networking opportunities, and other essential resources to establish and grow their businesses.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana: PMJDY is targeted toward the unbanked population, especially women in rural areas, as it helps in financial inclusion for them to be able to access banking and other financial services that are critical to their enterprises.

Women's Enterprise Development Programme: The programme offers training, finance, and needed support to women entrepreneurs to establish and develop their businesses.

- **Challenges and Gaps:** While these government-led programs are promising, there exist a number of gaps that limit their effectiveness. Some of the most important gaps are:
 - **Women's Entrepreneurship in India is Relatively Low:** Unfortunately, many women are prevented from realizing this basic aspiration due to a lack of access to medium and larger capital, widespread systemic barriers, in addition to deep-seated gender roles.
 - **There is poor awareness regarding all the programs and schemes formulated that are meant to support and assist their entrepreneurial nature,** which in turn discourages women from taking advantage of the government's schemes.
 - **Finance:** Women entrepreneurs don't have access to finance because of biased lending and lack of assets or credit history, thus inhibiting their growth.
 - **Social and Cultural Barrier:** The gender stereotype of society and cultural expectations about the role of women in society limit women's involvement in entrepreneurship, especially in traditional and rural areas.
 - **Gender Inequality:** There is a big gap that exists in entrepreneurship between men and women, as men are highly involved in entrepreneurship than women. The difference does not only exist at the system level but also in challenges women entrepreneurs are facing, including:
 - Women still bear the main burden of childcare, education, healthcare, elder care, and other family responsibilities compared to men, which has therefore constrained their time to build businesses.
 - **Cultural obstacles:** In most cultures, social expectations regarding women's roles are that family obligations take precedence over entrepreneurial aspirations.

Areas where further research is needed to break down the barriers to women's entrepreneurship are discussed in the paper. Such research must deeply dissect the particular challenges that face women, review the efficiency of prevailing policy interventions at national and local levels, and bring into perspective best practices that could make the financial landscape more resilient in terms of a gendered resource allocation towards women entrepreneurship. These specific needs must be defined for women entrepreneurs, especially from rural and deprived areas, to ensure that government initiatives reach those areas effectively. Further studies can also identify best practices and success stories applicable in other regions or sectors, contributing to the increasing rate of women's entrepreneurship.

Finally, despite all the gains made in the direction of women entrepreneurship in India, there are still wide gaps to be filled by more effective policies and targeted interventions and ongoing research endeavors for women entrepreneurs.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

It provides a conceptual framework that would work as a guiding force for academicians, researchers, and policymakers in redesigning and reworking programs and policies in order to foster women entrepreneurship in India. The study paves the way for the future work that will be inclusive, focused, and productive in giving its best practices and guidance while identifying the critical challenges and opportunities. The findings will be used to inform the development of new strategies to enable women entrepreneurs to acquire the needed support and resources for successful business ventures.

Governance Impact on Women Entrepreneurs: These findings from the study have tremendous scope for impacting governance with respect to women entrepreneurs. The report gives actionable suggestions that identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing finance, skill development, and other support, thus helping to strengthen current policies. This knowledge will be used as evidence-based input for policy makers in filling gaps within existing programs and in developing more responsive policies to the needs of women entrepreneurs, especially in rural and underserved areas. The knowledge might also help in constructing new models that are context-specific and proactively address the concerns of women in various sectors.

Well-Argued Results: The most important objective of this research is to make the state-based programs aimed at female entrepreneurs more effective and efficient. This report

examines current state initiatives, providing lessons learned about delivery and impact strengths and weaknesses. (Stremersch et al. 2015). It enhances the implementation strategies of GHRDs by solving problems related to awareness, accessibility, and coordination among the different stakeholders. These initiatives involve more streamlined processes for women to be able to access funds, mentorship and development opportunities. It also requires more effective mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation of the success of such programs so that it can be ensured they are producing beneficial results.

Economic Impact: The long-term outcome of these research findings is to bring an economic impact in terms of an improved quality of life for women entrepreneurs and their businesses. The study aims at contributing positively towards broader socioeconomic development through the ability of the environment to become more favorable for women's entrepreneurship. If provided with access to assistance and resources, women entrepreneurs can play a vital role in fostering innovation, job creation, and thereby contributing to local and national economies. By opening up more entrepreneurial opportunities to women and fostering their growth, we are not only improving the lives of individual women but also growing and enriching communities and society. This becomes a ripple effect whereby empowered women entrepreneurs can give back to lift others around them, thereby creating a more sustainable model of economic growth that benefits the community as a whole.

Finally, the implications of the study point to the need for targeted and effective policy that is tailored to the condition of women entrepreneurs. The research directly influences government policy and enhances the implementation of state programs. The working agenda is addressed towards the transformation of economy and making the environment more favorable for women-businesspersons in the country, and improving the living standard for women and their families in society.

Declaration:

We do not have a conflict of interest.

This study includes human participation. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, and their answers were treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity. Their written consent was collected.

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