

## Extended Abstract

Title: Perception of Women in the Field of Social Entrepreneurship: A Systematic Literature Review

Social entrepreneurship has increasingly emerged as a transformative approach to address social challenges through market-based strategies. Within this field, Social Women Entrepreneurship (SWE) represents a compelling intersection of gender, empowerment, and sustainable development. This study undertakes a systematic literature review spanning two decades (2003–2023), with a geographic focus on India, to examine how women are perceived and empowered through social entrepreneurship initiatives. Using 45 selected articles from the Web of Science database and keyword analysis via the TAGCROWD tool, the research synthesizes key trends, thematic concerns, and critical gaps.

The primary objective of the study is to investigate how social entrepreneurship serves as a vehicle for women's empowerment, while also exploring the structural and cultural barriers that women entrepreneurs in India continue to face. The findings emphasize that social entrepreneurship, particularly in rural and marginalized contexts, acts as a significant tool for economic self-reliance, community development, and gender equality. Women engaged in such ventures not only uplift themselves but also their communities through inclusive and sustainable practices.

The study is grounded in three key theoretical frameworks: Empowerment Theory, Gender Embeddedness Theory, and Communication Theory. Empowerment Theory (Kabeer, 1999) offers a lens to understand the progression of women from limited agency to autonomy and decision-making power. Gender Embeddedness Theory contextualizes how societal structures and cultural norms affect women's entrepreneurial behavior. Meanwhile, Communication Theory helps explain how gendered communication styles and relational strategies influence women's navigation in male-dominated ecosystems.

The review identifies three major thematic areas that dominate SWE discourse:

1. **Empowerment and Inclusion:** Many social enterprises, particularly self-help groups and grassroots organizations, enhance women's agency by providing access to microfinance, vocational training, and leadership roles.
2. **Barriers and Inequalities:** Cultural patriarchy, mobility restrictions, inadequate financial access, and limited technological literacy are recurring challenges. These are often exacerbated by policy gaps and societal biases.
3. **Social Impact and Sustainability:** Women-led social ventures are often more attuned to community needs, displaying higher sensitivity to education, health, and environmental concerns. However, the scalability and long-term viability of these ventures remain a pressing issue.

A significant observation from the literature is that economic gain does not always equate to empowerment. Many women who achieve financial success still struggle with entrenched gender roles, lack of familial support, and unequal access to decision-making spaces. The study also notes that technological adoption, a key enabler of modern entrepreneurship, remains a critical gap area in both policy and practice.

The bibliometric data further reveal a surge in academic interest post-2014, aligning with India's broader push for financial inclusion and women's empowerment. While countries like the USA and the UK show strong collaborative research networks, the Indian context is still evolving in terms of cross-disciplinary and policy-relevant studies.

In conclusion, the paper emphasizes the need for a more intersectional, policy-integrated, and gender-responsive approach to women's social entrepreneurship in India. It advocates for targeted interventions in areas such as digital access, gender-sensitive financial services, and mentorship networks. Future research should focus on understanding the emotional, relational, and cultural dimensions of entrepreneurship that are unique to women, while also mapping institutional support structures that facilitate long-term success.

By illuminating the transformative potential of SWE, this study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable development, women's rights, and inclusive growth. It serves as both a call to action for policymakers and a roadmap for future academic inquiry.