

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS: AN EXTENSIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURIAL EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

Women's participation in entrepreneurship has become a major driving force, for transformation within the corporate environment, inspiring development and emerging as a major force and innovation. This systematic literature review paper examines women's empowerment, women's entrepreneurship, sustainability barriers, and barriers to growth in a global context. This thorough analysis of the literature looks at the complex relationship between women's empowerment and entrepreneurship, this examination reveals the barriers to achieving resilient and sustainable progress. It emphasises the importance of understanding notions like autonomy and empowerment for genuine advancement and the discriminatory conventions that affect women globally. The study investigates the complex idea of women's empowerment, emphasizing the pursuit of equal opportunities, rights, and access to resources. It positions women's entrepreneurship as a critical driver of economic development, analyzing the challenges women face and the motivating factors that propel them to embark on entrepreneurial ventures. Obstacles to sustainability, such as gender norms, financial constraints, a lack of networks, and barriers to expansion, such as outmoded technology and legal complications, are explored.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Women Entrepreneurship, Economic Development, Barriers to Sustainability, Barriers to Growth.

INTRODUCTION

Women- Every culture imposes specific norms, restrictions, obligations, and rights on men and women based on biological (sex) differences (Bianco, et al., 2017). A closer examination of these behaviours and practices reveals that many of the rules and regulations in place are inherently discriminatory (Coleman, et al., 2019). Such discriminatory behaviour fosters a division between men and women, ultimately contributing to the widening of the gender gap (Muravyev, et al., 2009). Consequently, women frequently experience a lower social, cultural, religious, economic, and legal position than men, Alghamdi, (2018). Recognizing this disparity, the 2005 World Summit, emphasized that the "progress for women is progress for everyone" (Thorpe-Moscon, et al., 2021). The concept underscores the importance of promoting women's progress through diverse avenues, including the empowerment of autonomy, empowerment, position, and gender equality (Alkhaled, et al., 2018). However, these technical phrases are frequently difficult to distinguish and properly define. Autonomy, for instance, stems from empowerment and is occasionally misused due to misunderstanding (Lincoln, et al., 2002). Thus, understanding the true essence of these concepts is essential to defining a meaningful path toward genuine progress for both women and society as a whole (Merluzzi, et al., 2021).

Women Empowerment - "Women empowerment refers to providing equal opportunities, rights, and access to resources and decision-making power to women" (Thurairajah, et al., 2010). It entails fostering an atmosphere in which women may make decisions and exert control over their lives, both personally and in society, to reach their full potential (Bansal, et al., 2020). This broad concept encompasses numerous definitions. For instance, the World Bank defines

empowerment as “the process of enhancing an individual’s circumstances” and highlights the ability of individuals or collectives to formulate deliberate choices into anticipated consequences and concrete results. Women's entrepreneurial desire is truly achieved only when they can envision and actualize another existence (Fernanda Ewerling, et al., 2023). Although frequently employed, particularly about women and marginalized groups, the term “empowerment” is often misused and inadequately defined (Dyal-Chand, et al., 2013). Fostering capabilities rather than entrepreneurship, is a novel framework for community economic development (Hofstra, 2023, 839). It is frequently ambiguous whether phrases like women’s empowerment, gender equality, female autonomy, and women’s status are intended to denote the same fundamental ideas (Han, et al., 2023). While some academics argue that these terms might be synonymous, others believe they are distinct. Some authors highlight that autonomy suggests independence, while empowerment is possible with dependency (Govindasamy and Malhotra 1996; Malhotra and Mather 1997; Kabeer 1998).

Women Entrepreneurship – Entrepreneurship serves as the foundation of a nation’s economic development by generating new employment opportunities Globally, it has become a key driver of development and innovation within the corporate sector (LaVan and Murphy, 2007). In this context, women entrepreneurs are characterised as either individual women or collectives of women who embark upon the establishment and administration of a business enterprise, playing a vital role in the economic landscape. A female entrepreneur serves numerous purposes, including investigating the feasibility of launching a new venture, assessing risks, fostering innovation, coordinating operations, administering activities, managing the enterprise, and delivering effective leadership across all faces of the business (Belwal, et al., 2015). This prevalence of female entrepreneurs is increasing in nearly all countries' economies, driven by their growing awareness of their social and economic standing and untapped business potential (Rosca, et al., 2020). Key motivations for women to enter business endeavours include their knowledge, ability, and compliance in business (Saraswat, et al., 2020). Women entrepreneurs are motivated by a blend of push and pull factors, which empower them with the confidence to establish self-sustaining businesses and achieve financial independence. These driving forces not only influence their decision to pursue entrepreneurship but also contribute to their resilience and success in navigating the challenges of the entrepreneurial landscape (Mandongwe, et al., 2020). The motivational cause behind this relies on the notion of 'Women Entrepreneurs' as individuals who accept a hard task to fulfil their requirements and attain financial independence (Sahoo, 2020). An intense wish to accomplish enormously good things is an essential characteristic of businesswomen who may uphold moral principles in their social and familial lives (Kumar, 2015). Since the establishment of the media, women’s awareness of their characteristics, rights, and work circumstances has increased, further empowering them to pursue entrepreneurial ventures (Dhameja, 2002).

Barriers to Sustainability - Entrepreneurship provides a means of escaping or eliminating poverty and a long-term remedy for female unemployment, but not everyone can access it (Nafukho, et al., 2010). Despite its potential, only one of each of the small, medium, and big companies globally is owned by women, facing several gender-specific impediments to entrepreneurship (Ayene, et al., 2020). These barriers include gender norms, and cultural and religious expectations (Sheikh, et al., 2021). In many countries, women are still predominantly viewed as the primary caregivers for their children and are expected to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid household responsibilities compared to men. As a result, they often have less time and opportunity to engage in entrepreneurial activities and pursue business ventures (Porter, et al., 2021). Furthermore, mothers who choose to work in the labour market

are frowned upon or even disgraced in many cultures (De Vita, et al., 2014). Economic disparities also contribute significantly to impeding women's entrepreneurial endeavours. Women generally earn less, hold less secure jobs on average, and possess a smaller economic security blanket making them more vulnerable during enterprise losses or economic crises like COVID-19 (Mitchelmore, et al., 2013). Additionally, women-led businesses currently receive barely two per cent of the investment, further limiting their growth potential. Another critical barrier is the lack of confidence and self-efficacy among women (Nixdorff, et al., 2010). Several studies indicate that women have lower levels of confidence in their abilities than males do and skills (Welsh, et al., 2017). Fear of failing is often a result of this lack of confidence, making a lot of women question their capacity to launch their own company (Lall, et al., 2023).

Women possess less chances to connect to entrepreneurial networks and supervisors for a variety of causes (Solesvik, et al., 2019). These include continuing to be unemployed, spending most of their leisure time taking care of their kids and fulfilling family obligations, investing most of their waking hours in their homes looking after children and maintaining the family needs, or experiencing racist and prejudiced views (Kushins, et al., 2023). Consequently, they miss out on opportunities to locate business partners, secure funding, and money, and gain the confidence and knowledge necessary for entrepreneurial success (Ghouse, et al., 2017).

The digital gender gap is largely caused by limited access to resources and the Internet, prohibiting many women from acquiring online resources and entrepreneurship support (Ogundana, et al., 2021). This gap is evident as males are 21% more likely than females to be online, with a disparity reaching up to 52% in the least Developed Countries (LDCs), according to the World Wide Web Organization and the Association for Affordable Internet (A4AI) (Orser, et al., 2020). Additionally, a shortage of women role models further exacerbates this issue. For instance, according to YouGov, while one in every five young individuals has a business idea, nearly forty-six per cent of young women lack confidence in their ability to become successful female business leaders (Youth Business International 2021).

Barriers to Growth - There are a variety of roadblocks that might obstruct progress, some of which stem from previous issues or are a combination of these. Among these impediments are Problems with outdated technology or technological developments, formalities and legal requirements, essential raw materials in short supply, inadequate government help, convoluted bureaucratic procedures, lack of motivating elements, tax concerns, both direct and indirect, a business's location, high staff turnover, and lack of understanding about government programs and policies. Despite these multiple barriers, women are advancing in many fields, such as trade and manufacturing (Bardasi, et al., 2011). In countries with a sizable female population, such as India, it is critical to recognize and promote untapped potential (Ghosh, et al., 2007). Women have made enormous strides in breaking down barriers and shattering glass ceilings in the ever-changing business environment (Pugalia, et al., 2022). However, it is critical to recognize that many additional internal and external impediments to the sustainability of women entrepreneurs still exist (Ali, 2019). Internally, women frequently struggle with self-doubt and imposter syndrome, which can impair their confidence and decision-making (Aronovitch, 2020; Aronovitch, et al., 2023; Bell, 2023). Externally, there continues to be gender bias and systemic problems including unequal financing access and a dearth of mentorship possibilities (Motsei, 2020; Kulkarni, et al., 2023; Moraa, et al., 2023; Chakraborty, 2023). To ensure that women entrepreneurs can prosper, generate innovation, and fully contribute to the global economy, these barriers must be tackled collectively by policymakers, corporate leaders, and society as a whole (Robles, et al., 2014; Lepeley, 2019; Arshed, et al., 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Microcredit providers in Bangladesh focus on enhancing financial management skills and promoting group lending, fostering cohesiveness among rural women borrowers with business-oriented families (Afrin, et al., 2008; Nawaz, 2019; Chowdhury, et al., 2020). This strategic approach aims to empower women, enabling them to stand independently and fostering entrepreneurship in rural communities. Similarly, Reducing barriers to women's entrepreneurship necessitates a societal mindset shift, facilitated by collaboration between well-educated, liberal-minded individuals and local government agencies (Raghuvanshi, et al., 2017; Haugh, & Talwar, 2016; Thapa Karki, & Xheneti, 2018; Solesvik, et al., 2019).

Working together, we can raise public awareness of the value of female entrepreneurship, benefiting families, communities, the nation in the long term. Moreover, understanding how cultural and social considerations have an impact on rural areas for entrepreneurial growth, economic, geographical, and climatic factors (Movahedi, et al., 2012; de Groot, et al., 2017; Osunmuyiwa, & Ahlborg, 2019). Without a comprehensive analysis of these diverse elements, making informed policy decisions to promote entrepreneurship of rural women is challenging and carries risks. In a related context, agri-women entrepreneurs, addressing obstacles and seizing opportunities, are essential to the advancement of gender equality, economic prosperity, and rural development that is sustainable (Arumugam, et al., 2023; Bonin, et al., 2021; Venugopalan, et al., 2021; Kimbu, et al., 2020).

Cooperation in both financial institutions, community organizations, legislators and educational providers is crucial in creating an enabling ecosystem for these women to catalyze positive transformation. In Oman, support services enhance rural women's entrepreneurship, contributing to economic development (Ghouse, et al., 2017; Ghouse, et al., 2021; Welsh, et al., 2014; Bianco, et al., 2017). However, more investigation is needed to fully comprehend the nature of women-owned enterprises, especially regarding cultural constraints. The study highlights overlooked topics, covering the influence of changing seasons on female business owners and the part spouses play in their entrepreneurial path. Similarly, while several studies lay the groundwork for future research on rural women entrepreneurship, they often neglect key aspects such as cultural capital, personality traits, and factors unique to both micro and large enterprises.

These overlooked elements are crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape (Kungwansupaphan, et al., 2016; Lindvert, et al., 2017; Amrita, et al., 2018; Jha, et al., 2018). Future research should delve into these aspects, considering the varying perspectives of entrepreneurs across different countries. Additionally, the study's limited scope in one sector of an Indian state hinders broad generalizations. On the other hand, targeted training to enhance business skills, including crafting business plans and effective marketing strategies (Rudhumbu, et al., 2020; Lenka, & Agarwal, 2017; Ali, 2018; Byrne, et al., 2019).

Government agencies responsible for entrepreneurship development should mandate programs offering customized education and training to women entrepreneurs, focusing on financial resource identification and access. Furthermore, challenges impacting women's entrepreneurship, including insufficient government support, patriarchal societal structures, limited entrepreneurial knowledge, lack of collateral for funding, and time constraints (Mashapure, et al., 2022; Panda, 2018; Semkunde, et al., 2022; Adikaram, & Razik, 2023).

Interviews surprisingly, emphasize the significant role of collateral security as a barrier to finance access. The report emphasizes the need to address gender bias, offer comprehensive entrepreneurship education, and implement supportive government policies is crucial to improving the sustainability of women entrepreneurs, particularly in Manicaland province. Similarly, a study conducted in rural Bangladesh aimed to identify the key factors that influence women's engagement in micro-entrepreneurship Using the binary Probit model, it revealed that personal traits, desire for social standing, and freedom of work strongly influenced participation (Parvin, et al., 2012; Patrick, et al., 2016; Aparicio, et al., 2022; Goswami, et al., 2019).

Positive factors included access to credit, skill training, group membership, knowledge, and suitable infrastructure. However, challenges encompassed a lack of skills, start-up finance, gender discrimination, and balancing family and enterprise work. Despite efforts by the Bangladesh government and NGOs that have initiated efforts to encourage women's participation, effective policy adjustments and execution are crucial for empowering women and sustaining rural livelihoods.

Additionally, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test demonstrates that the PMMY plan considerably increases women's overall empowerment by providing financial support (Sahu, et al., 2021; Agarwala, et al., 2022; Maurya, & Mohanty, 2019). The study, focusing on Mudra loans' impact on job creation and women's livelihood improvement, notes a significant portion received other loans. Therefore, changes in empowerment cannot be solely attributed to Mudra loans. A broader, diverse sample across income levels and regions would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the scheme's overall impact. Psychological traits such as intrinsic motivation for achievement and learned attributes like risk-taking are crucial for female business empowerment (Vosta, et al., 2014; Khan, et al., 2021; Yap, et al., 2023; Ndofirepi, 2020).

Identifying individuals with innate qualities and providing education on acquired traits is essential. Additionally, social capital plays a pivotal role, acting as a competitive advantage and facilitating entrepreneurial activities for rural women. In many cultures, rural entrepreneurship is closely intertwined with the dynamics of social capital. Taking into account the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, female entrepreneurs must adopt innovative strategies to manage their enterprises and remain competitive (Hendratmi, et al., 2022; Manolova, et al., 2020; Sahi, et al., 2023; Anggadwita, et al., 2023). Addressing lifestyle changes and consumer patterns requires obtaining current knowledge, honing skills, identifying opportunities, generating new ideas, and forming partnerships.

This research has implications for both the academic community and the government, shedding light on the pandemic's effect on female entrepreneurs' survival and advocating for education and government support to build a sustainable livelihood development model for women-owned SMEs. Furthermore,) Women entrepreneurs in India can drive social and economic development, despite facing challenges in funding and marketing (Sharma, et al., 2012; Khursheed, 2022; Rudhumbu, et al., 2020 Alene, 2020). Microfinance is pivotal for SHG development, encouraging rural women's participation in microenterprises. With basic indigenous knowledge, skills, and resources, rural women can excel in entrepreneurship. To empower them further, there's a need for information on loan accessibility, key factors influencing entrepreneurial success include the funding agencies' certification procedures, knowledge of government aid programs, drive, technical know-how, and government and family support. These components are essential for empowering business owners to prosper in cutthroat settings and institutions. Finally Women entrepreneurs in rural areas, often with

limited education, invest small sums in family-run businesses for supplemental income or future economic security (Ferdousi, et al., 2019; Banki, & Ismail, 2015; Adetiloye, et al., 2020; Bianco, et al., 2017). Hindered by the absence of collateral, they face challenges accessing formal financial sources, resorting to high-interest microcredits from NGOs. A social business fund could offer an innovative alternative.

Discrimination in reaching markets and securing fair rates persists due to limited networks and mobility. Patriarchal norms impede access to resources, decision-making, and mobility crucial for business initiation. Collaborative efforts from government, NGOs, private businesses, and society are vital to remove barriers and support women's entrepreneurship using a social business model. (Tabares, et al., 2022; Yunis, et al., 2018; Datta, & Gailey, 2012; Henry, et al., 2016) Our research identified emergent themes in social entrepreneurship for rural women entrepreneurs, particularly highlighting the critical role of resource shortages, contextual factors, and livelihood growth. To address these challenges, it is imperative that governance structures and institutional frameworks are enhanced, thereby overcoming the limitations inherent in cooperative and associative models.

In line with these efforts, future research could examine how electronic markets might serve as a catalyst for livelihood expansion and the internationalisation of rural businesses, providing a new avenue for growth and sustainability. Additionally, there is a pressing need for further investigation into eco-entrepreneurship, which not only supports eco-innovation but also offers ecological solutions aimed at alleviating poverty in these regions. (Kumbhar, 2013; Ojediran, & Anderson, 2020; Byrne, et al., 2019; Özsungur, 2019) These efforts must be complemented by addressing broader societal and state responsibilities, notably, women entrepreneurs face distinct challenges, such as unclear life goals and the ongoing struggle to balance family responsibilities with their professional careers, limited financial freedom, and property ownership issues.

These obstacles often present a paradox between the entrepreneurial skills women possess and the financial resources available to them. To effectively address these barriers, there is a need for continuous inspiration, promotion, and motivation, coupled with enhanced collaboration among female entrepreneurs. In this context, large-scale awareness campaigns play a pivotal role in educating women about the diverse business opportunities available, thereby fostering a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Prisma

To determine which papers to include in a bibliometric review of research, we employed the principles depicted in Figure 1, applying the flow chart technique of PRISMA (Preferred reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). Initially, we identified 508 published papers from a database. To refine this list, we focused on articles published between 2015 and 2023, for this investigation, but we limited it down by looking at certain things. We began by focusing on articles published between 2015 and 2023, which reduced the count to 405 papers. We then examined the subject area and selected 361 papers relevant to our theme of interest. Following that, in our scope, we only included articles, bringing the total to 236. Ensuring all documents were in English, we were left with 234 papers. We then searched for specific keywords, such as "Women entrepreneurship", yielding 139 papers. Finally, we refined our selection by excluding articles based on their document type and category, resulting in a final review of 125 papers. This Bibliometric approach is guided by the Prisma Flow Chat, ensuring a thorough and focused selection process for our review.

III. Research Methodology

PRISMA: Flow Diagram

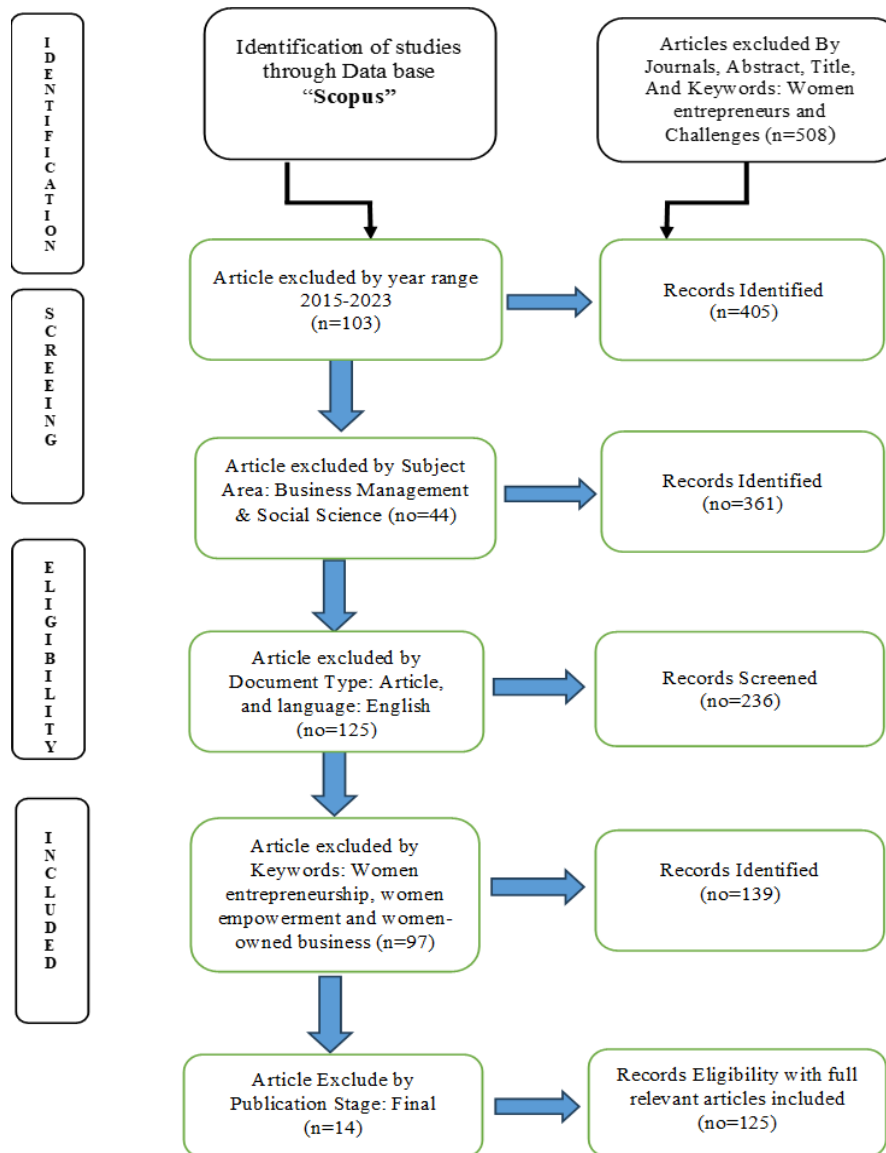


Figure 1

In this work, we employed a method called bibliometric review, which is a sort of systematic literature review, that requires extensive study. To achieve this, we used Bibliometrix in R-Studio and Vos Viewer, both of which are useful tools for data analysis. By utilizing these resources, we were able to gather and analyze information on women's entrepreneurship, examining numerous issues within this field. This platform provides a comprehensive array of services, including the gathering of study information on the most cited nations, and the most significant writers in the topic, the Corresponding Author Country, the Collaboration Network, the Co-Occurrence Network, and the Country's Scientific Production Word Cloud. Our dataset for this study spanned from 2015-2023. The bibliometric Analysis, which involves identifying

research outputs based on keywords, has become increasingly favoured for reviewing publications. This method allowed us to systematically organize and interpret the data, ensuring a comprehensive review. Specifically, we focused on studies related to women's entrepreneurship and bibliometrics studies in general. By employing the PRISMA framework and using Biblioshiny for interactive visualization, we ensured a structured and transparent approach to data collection and analysis.

Most Relevant sources

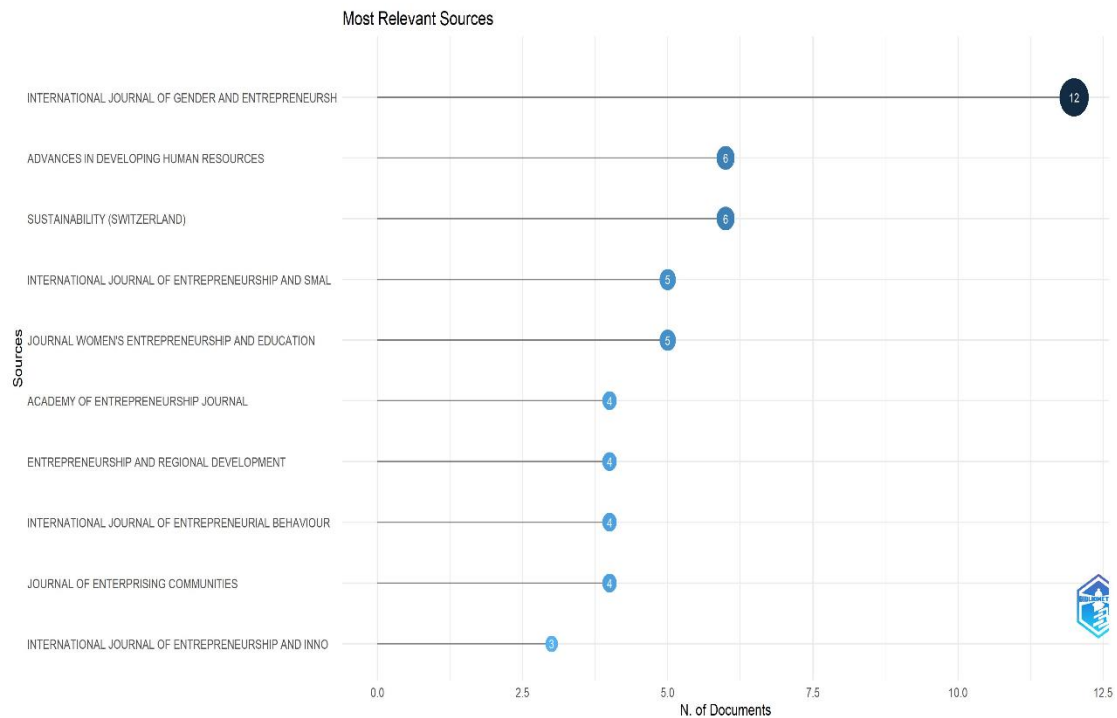


Figure 2

Figure 2 showcases the most relevant sources of the International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, is a leading source of research on the confluence of gender and entrepreneurship. It has published 12 articles and stands out among other journals covering women's entrepreneurship studies with a strong emphasis on determining how gender influences entrepreneurial actions. Sustainability (Switzerland) with 6 articles, investigates the relationship between business and long-term development, making it essential for anyone interested in environmentally conscientious and socially responsible entrepreneurship. The Advances in Developing Human Resources journal, also with 6 articles, focuses on human resource development and its relationship to entrepreneurship, offering insights into the function of individuals involved in the growth of businesses. The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business contributes 5 articles, addressing small business and entrepreneurship topics, supplying insightful information regarding the challenges and possibilities that face business owners. Similarly, The Journal of Enterprising Communities has 5 articles and focuses on community-based entrepreneurship, exploring how entrepreneurial activities can benefit local communities and support economic development. The Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education, with an additional five articles, emphasizes the study of women's entrepreneurship and how education might enable women to start their businesses and manage businesses. This body of work reflects the diverse and multidisciplinary nature of studies on the entrepreneurship of women.

Affiliations Production over Time

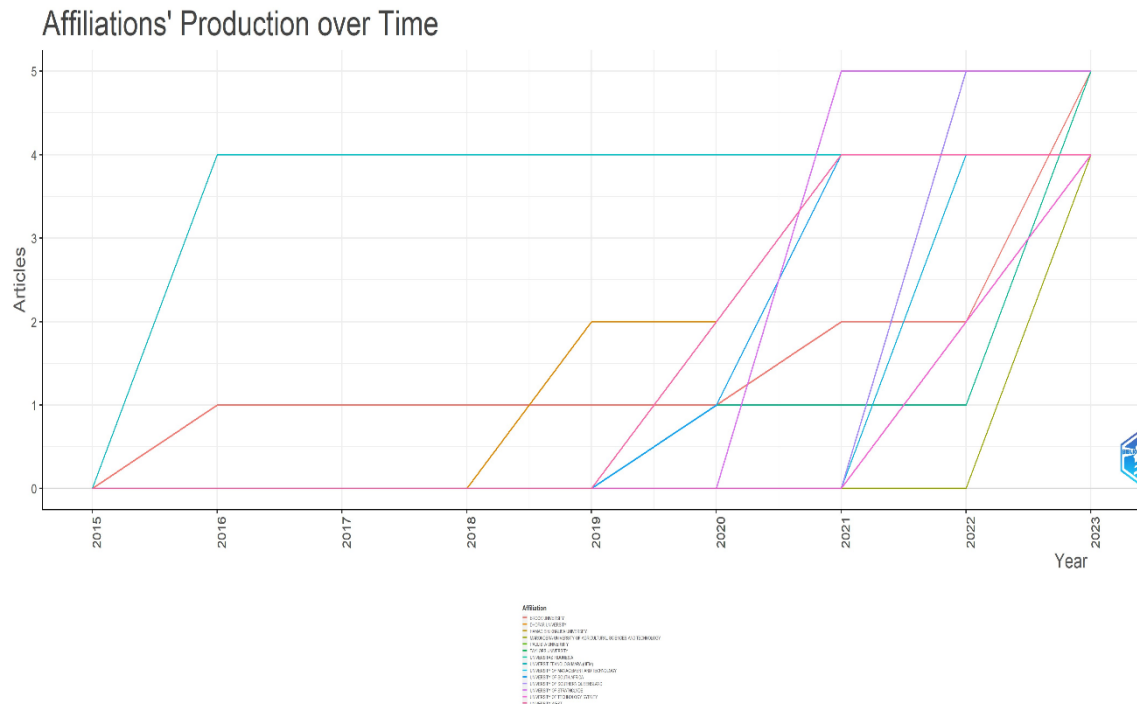


Figure 3

The figure represents the production of articles over time, categorized by affiliations, from 2015 to 2023. As illustrated in Figure 3. Brock University consistently produced one publication each year, from 2016 to 2021, with a significant increase in productivity in 2022 and 2023, yielding 2 and 5 publications, respectively. University Tektology Mara (UITM): From 2016 to 2023, the university consistently published four articles each year, suggesting a high level of research effort.

Dhofar University: Research output increased from two publications in 2019 to four articles per year from 2021 to 2023. Taylor's University: Increased research output gradually from two papers in 2020 to four publications each year from 2021 to 2023. Universitas Indonesia: Provided a varied number of articles (1 in 2020, 1 in 2021, and 5 in 2023) South African University: Increased research output, producing four articles each year from 2021 to 2023 (one in 2020). University West: Produced two articles in 2020 and boosted output to four articles per year from 2021 to 2023. From 2021 to 2023, the University of Strathclyde published 5 publications every year.

Hamad Bin Khalifa University: Submitted four articles in 2022 and 2023 consistently. Paulista University: Four articles were published in 2022 and 2023, exhibiting steady research productivity. Furthermore, the following institutions kept their research output: University of Management and Technology: 4 publications published in 2022 and 2023. University of Southern Queensland: 5 publications published in 2022 and 2023.

University of Technology Sydney: Increased research output, with two papers published in 2022 and four articles published in 2023. In 2023, Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology submitted four articles, exhibiting its research presence.

Corresponding Author's Countries

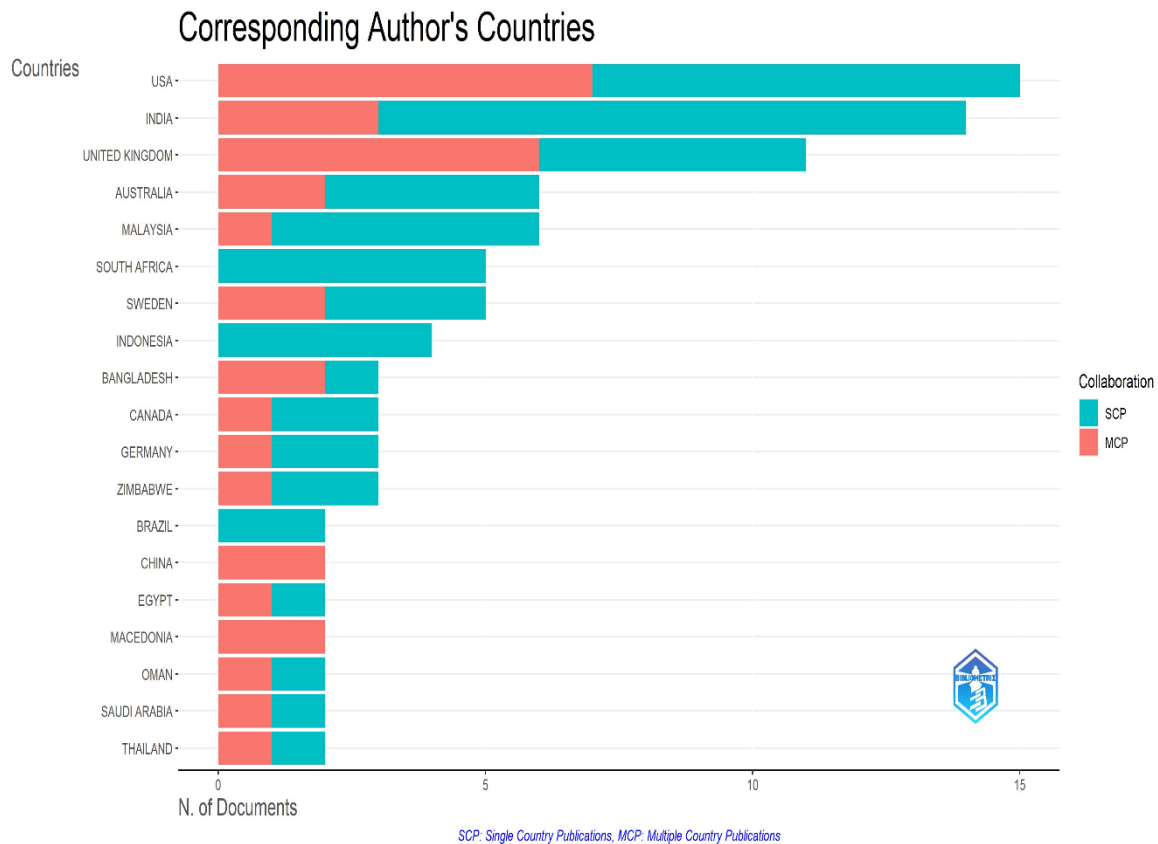


Figure 4

The figure represents the distribution of corresponding authors by country, categorized into Single Country Publications (SCP) and Multiple Country Publications (MCP). USA leads with the highest number of corresponding authors, demonstrating a strong presence in both SCPs and MCPs.

India follows closely, with a considerable portion of its output also represented in MCPs, reflecting active participation in international research networks. The United Kingdom and Australia are similarly well-represented, with a balanced mix of SCPs and MCPs, highlighting both their domestic research capacity and international collaborations. Other countries like Malaysia, South Africa, and Sweden show a balanced or dominant presence in SCPs, indicating strong national research activities.

However, countries like Bangladesh, Canada, and Germany exhibit notable participation in MCPs suggesting a preference necessity for international collaboration to enhance research impact.

Lower down the list, countries such as Zimbabwe, Egypt, and Oman have fewer documents overall, with a mix of SCPs and MCPs, indicating emerging or developing research continuous, possibly with growing international collaborations. The mix of SCPs and MCPs across countries reflects diverse strategies and capacities in global scholarly collaboration.

Most Global Cited Documents

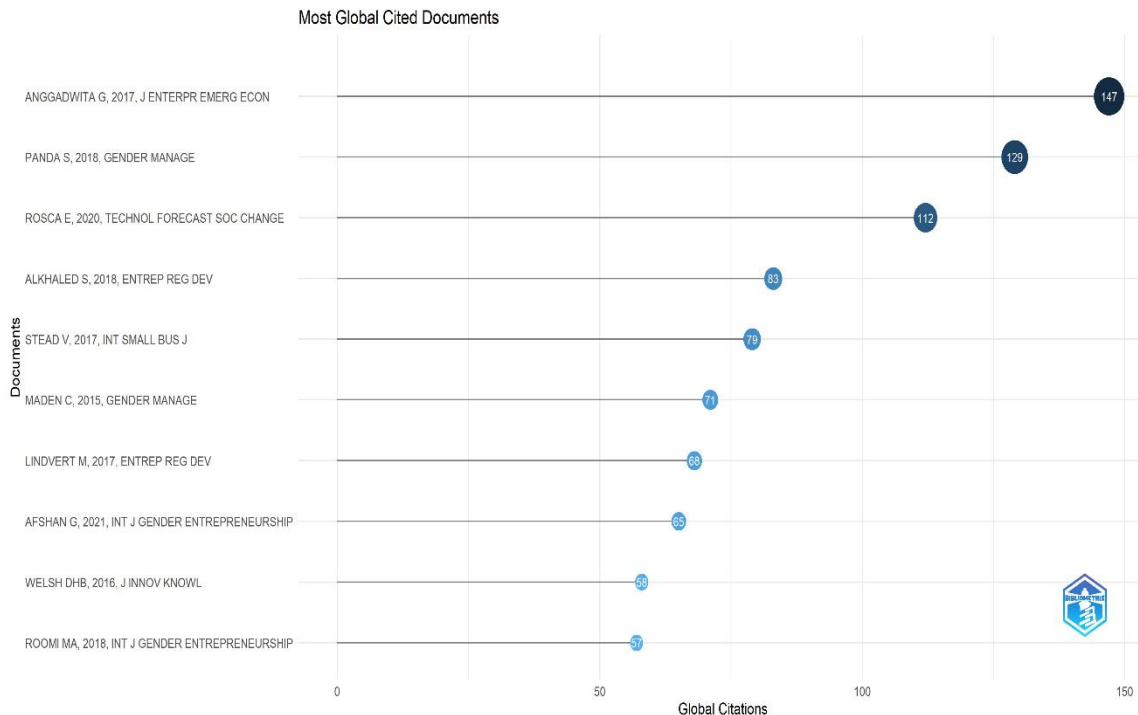


Figure 5

The figure presents the “Most Internationally Cited Papers” about studies on women in business and gender. The 2017 paper by Anggadwita et al, with 147 global citations, is at the top of the list in the academic Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, published in making it the most influential work in this field. Following closely is the 2018 article by Pnada in Gender in Management, which has garnered 129 citations, and Rosca et al., 2020 publication in Technological Forecasting and Social Change, with 112 citations, indicating a significant impact despite being a more recent contribution. Other notable works include Alkhaled’s 2018 paper on Entrepreneurship and Regional Development and Stead’s 2017 article in the International Small Business Journal, with 83 and 79 citations respectively.

These articles demonstrate consistent academic engagement and recognition over time. Mid-range cited documents such as Maden’s 2015 and Lindvert’s 2017 works, both focused on Gender Management and regional development respectively, show substantial influence with 71 and 68 citations each. Afshan’s 2021, the International Journal of Gender Entrepreneurship - has 65 citations, further down the list, Afshan’s 2021 essay published in the International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Gender, Welsh’s 2016, piece in The Journal of Innovation and Knowledge both have 56 citations, indicating recent contributions that are rapidly gaining attention.

Finally, Roomi’s 2018 article Rounding out the list in The International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship with 37 citations, demonstrating growing influence. The distribution of citations across these documents highlights key contributions to the field, with a mix of both foundational and emerging research shaping current academic discourse on gender and entrepreneurship.

Keywords Co-Occurrence

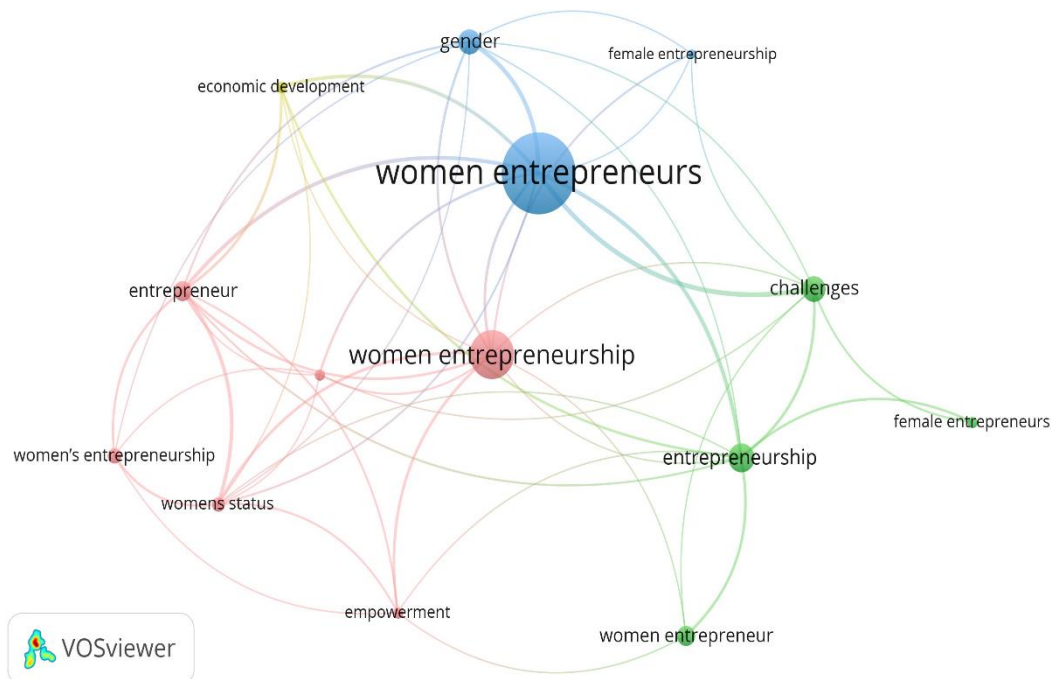


Figure 6

These keyword co-occurrences in Figure 6, which depicts women entrepreneurs, were created using VOSviewer. The mentioned keywords “women entrepreneurs” and “Women's Entrepreneurship” appear as central nodes, indicating their strong presence and interconnection with other terms. Larger nodes signify a higher frequency of occurrence, with “women entrepreneurs” being the most prominent keyword, followed closely by “women entrepreneurship.” Keywords like “Gender,” and “entrepreneurship,” “female entrepreneurship,” and “challenges,” are directly linked to these central terms, reflecting their relevance in discussions about women entrepreneurs. The network also connects to terms like “Empowerment,” “economic development,” and “women's status” indicating that these are important topics in the larger conversation about women in business. The links various colors and nodes represent different clusters of related themes, showing the multifaceted nature of the field and the diverse research focus areas within the domain of women entrepreneurship. Overall, the figure underscores the interconnectedness of these themes and highlights the complexity of factors influencing women entrepreneurs.

Future Research Directions

Future research on women's entrepreneurship would benefit from adopting a multi-dimensional approach to better capture the complexities of women's empowerment across diverse contexts. This more comprehensive viewpoint can offer a more profound understanding of the different elements impacting women's entrepreneurship experiences and results. Cross-cultural and cross-country comparisons are essential to uncovering how varying social, Economic, political, and social environments influence women's entrepreneurial experiences and opportunities. An intersectional analysis is also critical, as it allows researchers to explore how overlapping identities, including race, class, ethnicity, and disability, intersect with gender to shape unique entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities. Longitudinal studies that follow

female businesses could provide valuable perspectives on the evolving nature of the challenges they face and enablers throughout their entrepreneurial journeys. Additionally, qualitative in-depth investigations could enrich the literature by capturing women's perceptions, motivations, and decision-making processes in entrepreneurship. Evaluating support programs and policies is another vital area, as it can help assess the effectiveness of existing interventions and identify best practices for promoting women's entrepreneurship. Technology continues to transform entrepreneurs and strategies to bridge the digital gender divide. They understand the sustainability and explore the scalability of women-led businesses and another exciting area of study is how social networks and mentoring contribute to the success of entrepreneurs, as it could inform the development of more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems. Moreover, examining generational differences among women entrepreneurs could yield insights for tailoring support to the needs of younger and emerging entrepreneurs. Finally integrating masculinity studies into studies on female entrepreneurs may offer a more thorough comprehension of gender dynamics and their influence on entrepreneurial outcomes. Together, these research directions promise that this approach would help create a more nuanced and thorough comprehension of women's entrepreneurship, informing the development of more effective policies and support mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive review of literature examines the complex landscape surrounding women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, and the key barriers to sustainability and growth. The paper emphasizes the critical importance of understanding concepts like autonomy, empowerment, and gender equality to foster meaningful advancement for women and society. The review highlights female entrepreneurs as a vital driver of economic development, identifying the multifaceted motivations and capabilities that inspire women. However, it also delves into the significant barriers that hinder women's entrepreneurial pursuits and long-term success, including gender norms, financial constraints, and restricted use of resources and networks. The findings underline an urgent need for a multi-pronged approach to address these deeply entrenched barriers. This includes promoting gender-equal policies, investing in women's skills development, enhancing access to finance and technology, and fostering a cultural shift to challenge discriminatory norms. By tackling these challenges holistically, the paper argues that women's empowerment and entrepreneurship can be unlocked as potent inducers of equitable and long-term economic prosperity.

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