

An Empirical Investigation of Multi-Dimensional Factors Influencing the Entrepreneurial Intensity of Women Entrepreneurs in West Bengal

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in societal prosperity and economic development. The promotion of women entrepreneurship, recognized globally as a key objective of sustainable development, serves as a powerful mechanism for women's empowerment. Prior research indicates that women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to national GDP, generate employment, reduce poverty and inequality, and enhance overall social welfare. Although women possess many inherent qualities that make them capable and successful business owners, they often encounter barriers that restrict their growth from small, under-resourced ventures to larger and more profitable enterprises. In India, despite substantial leadership potential among women, structural, socioeconomic, and political constraints hinder their entrepreneurial advancement. To overcome these challenges and achieve sustained business success, women entrepreneurs must exhibit high levels of **Entrepreneurial Intensity (EI)**—a construct reflecting the degree of entrepreneurial activity within a business, determined by an individual's innovativeness, risk-taking ability, and proactivity. EI is considered a strong predictor of business performance as it captures the commitment and focus entrepreneurs devote to their ventures. A comprehensive review of literature identifies four core dimensions of EI: **innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness**. This study investigates the potential positive influence of multiple identified factors on the entrepreneurial intensity of women-owned enterprises in West Bengal and proposes corresponding hypotheses for empirical examination. With the help of SMART PLS software, a conceptual model was tested to measure the impact of various factors influencing entrepreneurial intensity among women entrepreneurs.

Key words: Women entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Intensity, Degree of Innovativeness, Degree of Proactiveness, Degree of Risk taking, Degree of Competitive aggressiveness.

Introduction:

A nation's ability to prosper economically depends on its financial, material, and human resources. Human capital or entrepreneurs are considered as one of the most essential resources required to achieve economic growth of any country. They are viewed as catalysts with the power to alter the course of events in the business sector. Economic development cannot result only from technological advancements unless entrepreneurs capitalize on these results.

Entrepreneurship is one of those fields where gender based inequality is a major issue which has to be addressed. Eliminating the gender disparity is essential to fostering long-term economic growth, despite the perception that women are comparatively less inclined than males for starting new firms (Rietveld & Patel, 2022). When it comes to their skills and abilities, women tend to be less confident than males and lack the expertise or abilities necessary to launch their own business, which causes fear of failing and undermines confidence even further. Due to these factors it is being observed that a large number of women entrepreneurs even after entering into entrepreneurship cannot sustain in their entrepreneurial journey. It has been observed that the external support provided by the government and NGOs are not enough to promote women entrepreneurship if they do not have entrepreneurial intensity. In order to make the women entrepreneurs sustain in long run it is important to focus on their entrepreneurial intensity. A high degree of EI among women entrepreneurs must be ensured and encouraged for achieving the desired growth in women entrepreneurship in West Bengal.

The idea of entrepreneurial intensity (EI) measures the degree of entrepreneurship found in a business. It is believed that degrees of entrepreneurial intensity (EI) and business performance metrics are strongly correlated (Morris & Sexton, 1996). An entrepreneur's level of passion and dedication to their firm can be gauged by looking at their entrepreneurial intensity. It means the level of entrepreneurial activity which can be determined by an individual's capacity for innovation, risk-taking, and proactivity (Chanu & Karmakar, 2017). It gauges how committed and focused entrepreneurs are on their business endeavors. Observations have shown that individuals having high levels of entrepreneurial intensity, have high levels of potential for entrepreneurship, which will help them develop sustainably in that area (Chhabra et al., 2020).

Statement of Research Problem:

Despite a considerable increase over the past few years, the proportion of women launching their own enterprises has not increased to the anticipated level. In this case, increasing the degree of internal motivation among women entrepreneurs through increased entrepreneurial intensity is expected to be highly beneficial for expansion of women entrepreneurship in addition to external support.

Review of Literature:

- **Srinivasa et al. (2023)** in their research paper “Factors affecting the performance of micro-level women entrepreneurs: a comparative study between UAE and India” suggested a theoretical framework that encompasses the variables influencing the effectiveness of micro-level female entrepreneurs. A cross-sectional survey based on structured questionnaire was carried out. The collected data was used for the validation of the suggested model. Using the structural equation modeling method, the gathered data was examined. According to the study, competitive aggressiveness, incubation, innovativeness, market orientation, and a willingness to take risks all had a beneficial effect on the success and expansion of enterprises in both countries, even though education had no impact on business performance.
- **Varghese et al. (2023)** in their research paper aimed to evaluate how women entrepreneurs' success was impacted by their willingness to take risks. This study used the convenience sampling method with a self-reporting questionnaire to examine women entrepreneurs in Bangalore operating businesses centered on agriculture. This study found that female entrepreneurs who exhibit a greater willingness to take calculated risks are more likely to succeed in their endeavors. These results show how important it is to have a risk-taking mindset in order to anticipate and encourage success among female entrepreneurs.
- **Sisodia and Jan (2023)** in their research paper “Entrepreneurial Intensity and Strategic Entrepreneurship: An Empirical Investigation of Women Entrepreneurs” aimed for investigating the relationship between two key facets of women's entrepreneurship: degree of the entrepreneurial activity and strategic behaviour of entrepreneurship (strategic entrepreneurship). It was observed from the findings of this research that female entrepreneurs in Jammu and Kashmir have strong effects of entrepreneurial intensity on their strategic entrepreneurial conduct.
- **Chhabra et al. (2020)** in their study “Investigating the Role of Motivation in Strengthening Entrepreneurial Intention among Women Entrepreneurs in India” aimed to examine how motivation helps in promoting entrepreneurial intention among Indian women entrepreneurs. This study delves into the motivational drivers that contribute to this intention and develops an instrument that elucidates the constructs of entrepreneurial intention and validates its validity.
- **Nik Azman and Kassim (2019)** in their paper intended to determine how ROSCA assists Malaysian women business owners in overcoming capital shortages and in need of financial support. With this support, they were able to get long-term investment for their enterprise, which contributed towards greater financial inclusion in the economy.

Research Gap:

Not many studies have looked into the degree of entrepreneurial intensity among female entrepreneurs especially in the eastern Indian states. The impetus of the current research is to effectively compliment previous research on Entrepreneurial Intensity.

Objectives of the Study:

This study attempts to:

- Identify and measure the contribution of various factors influencing entrepreneurial intensity among the target women entrepreneurs in West Bengal.
- Examine which factors of entrepreneurial intensity of women entrepreneurs are significantly high in West Bengal and which factors need to be improved for enhancing the level of entrepreneurship.

Hypotheses of the Study:

In the study, the following four hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Innovativeness and entrepreneurial intensity among women entrepreneurs in West Bengal are significantly related.

H2: Pro-activeness and entrepreneurial intensity among women entrepreneurs in West Bengal are significantly related.

H3: Risk taking and entrepreneurial intensity among women entrepreneurs in West Bengal are significantly related.

H4: Competitive aggressiveness and entrepreneurial intensity among women entrepreneurs in West Bengal are significantly related.

Research Methodology:

This study uses inferential statistics for data analysis. A structured questionnaire consisting of close ended questions was prepared to collect primary data from the target respondents. Using purposive sampling method, the sample was collected from 358 respondents operating their business in rural and semi- urban areas of West Bengal.

CB- SEM was used as a research tool to confirm the relationship between the independent variables (Degree of Innovativeness, Degree of Proactiveness, Degree of Risk taking and Degree of Competitive aggressiveness) and dependent variable (Entrepreneurial Intensity) to test the proposed hypotheses. The SEM model aids in concurrently identifying the link between all the dependent and independent variables. It also aids in determining whether the various independent variables have an impact on the dependent variable. This entire data analysis was conducted in SMART PLS (v4).

Data Analysis:

Before starting data analysis, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Each variable in this study had a Cronbach Alpha score that was higher than the necessary threshold of 0.70.

		Cronbach's alpha (standardized)
Entrepreneurial Intensity		0.892
Competitive Aggressiveness		0.797
Innovation		0.797
Proactiveness		0.834
Risk Taking		0.833

Source: Computed in Smart PLS 4

In order to test the proposed hypotheses, the study examined the path coefficients. In this study one tailed t test was done at 5% level of significance to find out the impact of various independent constructs on the dependent constructs. The following table shows the t value and p value of the various constructs.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Beta Coefficient	S.D.	t value [greater than 1.645]	P value [less than 0.05]	Hypothesis Status
Innovation	Entrepreneurial Intensity	0.217	0.073	2.969	0.002	H1 supported
Pro-Activeness	Entrepreneurial Intensity	0.237	0.05	4.28	0	H2 supported
Risk Taking	Entrepreneurial Intensity	0.134	0.05	2.656	0.004	H3 supported
Competitive Aggressiveness	Entrepreneurial Intensity	0.641	0.06	10.725	0	H4 supported

Source: Computed in Smart PLS 4

It is evident from the table above that each of the independent variable is influencing the dependent variable Entrepreneurial Intensity as per the mentioned standard. It can be said all the proposed hypotheses are significant. The beta coefficient shows the weight of impact of each of the independent variable on the dependent variable. It can be said that the degree of innovativeness, degree of pro-activeness, degree of risk taking and degree of competitive aggressiveness has a significant and positive impact on entrepreneurial intensity.

Conclusion:

It is being found in this study that women entrepreneurs operating in West Bengal are highly competitive and pro-active. They are quite innovative but due to certain limitations, sometimes they are unable to do something new in spite of their willingness. But the main factor which is lacking among them is their risk bearing ability. If proper support can be provided by government and non-governmental organizations to promote women entrepreneurs, then their innovative capacity and risk bearing ability can be improved. Given that competitive aggressiveness and proactivity are already high traits, women entrepreneurs in West Bengal will exhibit great overall entrepreneurial intensity across all domains. A high level of entrepreneurial intensity will result to an increase in women's entrepreneurship in the state as a whole, which will ultimately help West Bengal achieve its goal of a sustainable development of women's entrepreneurship.

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