

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the Indian economy has undergone significant structural transformations across various sectors, including industry, agriculture, trade, and commerce. These changes have led to a notable diversification in the pattern of ownership and the rise of a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. India today is witnessing a surge in the number of entrepreneurs, with an even greater potential waiting to be tapped. Entrepreneurship can be broadly defined as the process of initiating and operating a new economic activity or enterprise. It represents a societal trend of innovation, self-reliance, and enterprise development. As per Begum (1993), an entrepreneur is an individual who identifies opportunities and takes the initiative to convert them into sustainable ventures. The International Labour Organization adds to this definition by outlining traits such as self-confidence, risk-taking ability, leadership, originality, and a future-oriented mindset as core characteristics of successful entrepreneurs.

In the Indian context, entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a powerful vehicle for economic growth, employment generation, and social transformation. Its evolution has been deeply influenced by the country's cultural heritage, social values, and traditional practices, making it unique and multifaceted. One of the most remarkable developments in recent years is the rise of women entrepreneurs. Across the globe, and particularly in India, women are stepping into entrepreneurial roles with growing confidence and competence. This trend is fueled by both push factors (such as financial necessity or dissatisfaction with existing employment) and pull factors (such as the desire for independence, ambition, or personal fulfillment).

The entrepreneurial potential of women has historically remained underutilized. However, with increasing awareness, education, and exposure to technology and media, women today are more informed about their rights, capabilities, and the opportunities available to them. As a result, they are venturing into diverse fields—ranging from traditional businesses like food processing and handicrafts to modern sectors like information technology, e-commerce, health, and telecommunications.

Women entrepreneurs bring a unique set of qualities to the business world, including resilience, creativity, empathy, and a holistic vision. Their participation not only

contributes to economic growth but also plays a critical role in empowering communities, improving family welfare, and promoting gender equality. The idea of a "women entrepreneur" encompasses more than just a businesswoman. It refers to a determined individual who accepts the challenge of meeting personal and professional goals, strives to be economically independent, and takes initiative in decision-making related to her life and career. A strong drive to create meaningful change—both within her family and in society—is often a defining trait of entrepreneurial women.

Despite the encouraging progress, several barriers still hinder the full realization of women's entrepreneurial potential in India. These include limited access to finance, lack of training and mentorship, social constraints, gender bias, and inadequate policy support. Addressing these issues through targeted interventions such as financial literacy programs, women-centric business incubators, supportive legislation, and awareness campaigns is crucial.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Exploring the role of women entrepreneurs in the inclusive development of Kannur district holds immense significance, as it offers valuable insights into how gender-balanced entrepreneurship can drive economic progress, promote social equity, and support sustainable development in the region. This study can help highlight the vital contributions women make to local economies, uncovering pathways to strengthen financial inclusion, generate employment, and uplift marginalized communities. By focusing on women-led enterprises, the research can also bring attention to the specific challenges women entrepreneurs face—such as limited access to capital, market constraints, and entrenched social norms. Understanding these barriers is crucial for crafting effective policies and programs that not only promote gender equality but also build a more inclusive and resilient local economy. Ultimately, this study aims to empower women entrepreneurs in Kannur and position them as key agents of transformative growth and community development.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in the economic development of any nation, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries where it acts as a catalyst for industrialization, job creation, and innovation. Without entrepreneurship, industrial

progress remains stagnant. Women, in particular, have emerged as significant contributors to this process, driven by their skills, knowledge, creativity, and a strong desire to bring about positive change. Their involvement in entrepreneurial activities not only boosts economic growth but also helps in reducing poverty and breaking societal inequalities. Globally, women constitute a substantial share of the workforce in the Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) sector and make up nearly one-third of the labor force in manufacturing. In addition to income-generating activities, women often take on roles as primary earners, unpaid family workers, and caregivers, making their economic participation even more impactful. In this context, the study of home-based women entrepreneurs in Kannur district aims to explore the factors driving women towards entrepreneurship, the socio-economic influences on their business decisions, and the challenges they face.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the role of women entrepreneurs in the economic development of the region, with a focus on their contribution to local and regional growth.
- To analyze the performance of women entrepreneurs and identify the key challenges and problems they encounter in their entrepreneurial journey.
- To investigate the critical factors that contribute to the success of women-led enterprises.
- To examine the socio-economic background of women entrepreneurs and its influence on their entrepreneurial activities.
- To provide practical suggestions and recommendations for promoting and supporting the growth and development of women entrepreneurship.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a systematic approach used to solve research problems and understand the rationale behind the study. It outlines the purpose of the research, defines the problem, describes the data collection methods, and explains the techniques applied for analysis. This study aims to investigate the role, challenges, and socio-economic background of women entrepreneurs in Kannur district, as well as to provide meaningful suggestions for their development.

Research Design

The study adopts a **descriptive research design**, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape among women in Kannur. The quantitative aspect involves structured questionnaires designed to collect data on business performance, challenges, and socio-economic factors. The qualitative component includes observations and open-ended questions aimed at capturing motivational factors, aspirations, and personal experiences of the respondents. This mixed-method approach ensures both measurable data and deeper insights into the entrepreneurial journeys of women in the district.

Sampling Method

The study utilizes the **convenience sampling method**, where respondents are selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. This approach is practical and efficient, especially in community-based research where the targeted population may be scattered or informal.

Sampling Design

A **sample size of 100 women entrepreneurs** from Kannur district has been selected for the study. The sample includes women engaged in various home-based and small-scale enterprises, providing a diverse representation of entrepreneurial activity in the region.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Primary data for the study has been collected through:

- Structured questionnaires administered to women entrepreneurs
- Direct observation of entrepreneurial activities and business settings

Secondary Data

Secondary data has been gathered from existing literature and credible sources, including:

- Academic journals and research papers
- Government and NGO reports
- Reputed websites and online databases related to women entrepreneurship

Tools of Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using both **statistical and graphical tools**. Quantitative data is tabulated and interpreted using methods such as:

- Percentages and ratios
- Ranking techniques

For better understanding and visualization, results are also presented using:

- **Bar diagrams**
- **Pie charts**
- **Tables and graphical representations**

These tools help in deriving meaningful inferences and drawing conclusions relevant to the objectives of the study.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Due to time constraints only a limited sample size taken and analyzed still a larger sample size could increase the accuracy in the result
- The area of study is limited to Kannur district only. Hence the result may not be true for other geographical area.
- Quality of information highly depended on the knowledge of the respondent.
- There is only a limited time to collect data for preparing project report.
- The response of the respondents may or may not be genuine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE NO
1	INTRODUCTION	1-6
2	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	7-10
3	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11-23
4	DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	24-42
5	FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION	43-46
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	
	APPENDIX	