

# Chapter 20

## Thriving Amidst Challenges: Exploring Family Environment, Resilience, and Midlife Crisis among Middle–Aged Rural Women Entrepreneurs in India

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The emergence of female entrepreneurs in rural India symbolizes a paradigm shift in the economic landscape, with women being recognized as important vehicles of innovation, creation of employment, and economic growth in general. This chapter overviews the revolutionary impact of entrepreneurship in strengthening rural women, illustrating insights from secondary data like academic literature and online sources. It emphasizes intergenerational connections, work-life balance, and family support, all of which are critical in forming women’s business experiences. Additionally, this chapter also overviews the particular difficulties that midlife crisis brings about, which cause middle-aged female entrepreneurs to reflect and reevaluate their priorities and ambitions. Rural women sail through these obstacles with the help of resilience which is the capability to bounce back and prosper in the face of difficulty and entrepreneurship as a means of achieving personal development and making a positive impact on the community.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.”

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Maya Angelou

A nation's economic viability can be determined by its entrepreneurial activity (Huang et al., 2022). According to the Hindu texts, a woman embodies Shakti, which means "source of power." With the power of Shakti, a woman can accomplish anything. An educated woman nowadays does not wish to confine their life behind the four walls of their home (Rajput et al., 2016). Women are progressively credited for their significant contributions towards creative thinking, generating employment opportunities, and general prosperity. India's Entrepreneurship Framework has seen a magnificent rise in the number of women involved in various business ventures, especially in rural areas. Entrepreneurship is a driving force behind worldwide economic development (Thousani & Edy, 2023). "Any woman who builds, adopts, and reproduces a business industry is called a woman entrepreneur," states Schumpeter. In India, the growth of female entrepreneurs and their influences on the economy are very apparent. Over the past ten years, women's entrepreneurship has gained a lot of acknowledgment as a significant but underutilized source of economic growth. Indian women entrepreneurs are in particular capable of turning obstacles into opportunities, particularly in rural India. They rewrite the story of rural entrepreneurship with perseverance and creativity, epitomizing resilience and promoting sustainable development from the grassroots level. Even though women in rural areas struggle to overcome stereotypes, there are many social and cultural barriers (Mishra & Gautam, 2018). However, several obstacles often accompany their entrepreneurial path, such as restricted resource availability, social norms, and balancing business ambitions and family obligations.

## **Background of the Study**

The family is the centre of the social structure and the basis of social life. In the family environment, a person is born, raised, and develops their unique identity. It is this organization that expands, safeguards and perpetuates the human race (Rajani & Sarada, 2008). The family environment plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences and aspirations of women entrepreneurs. It is very much essential to understand how intergenerational dynamics, family and work-life balance, and supportive spouses affect women's entrepreneurial endeavours (Mishra & Gautam, 2018). A rural woman entrepreneur in her middle age can face another challenge, which is called a midlife crisis. The reality of age, physical decline, or career instabilities can cause mental anguish and abrupt changes in aims and habits, which are referred to as "midlife crises" (Wethington, 2000). For female entrepreneurs, the midlife crisis can also be a significant obstacle that forces reflection and a re-evaluation of objectives and priorities during their midlife. At this juncture, a woman must possess resilience—the capacity to bounce back and prosper in the face of adversity—to endure any hardship in the face of struggle when balancing her professional and personal life (Bonanno, 2004). Even though it can be demanding at times, midlife crises may generate an urge for transformation, leading rural women to explore entrepreneurship as a way to comprehend their own goals and make a positive influence on their societies. Entrepreneurship enforces rural women as it gives them free will, adjustability, and possibilities to make effective use of their previous life experiences and capacities. This chapter sheds light on the experiences, coping strategies, and paths to blooming in the face of adversity of rural women entrepreneurs in India by exploring the complex dynamics of the familial environment, resilience, and midlife crisis.

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