

Chapter 6

Women, Enterprise, and Empowerment: Empirical Findings on Female Entrepreneurship and Poverty Alleviation in the Global South

ABSTRACT

To assess the role of female entrepreneurship in alleviating poverty in developing countries, this chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of empirical data gathered from female entrepreneurs across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. The research examines the demographic characteristics of women entrepreneurs, their motivators, challenges, and coping strategies, and the measurable impacts of their businesses on family income, community development, and social transformation, through surveys and qualitative interviews. The findings reveal that while women's entrepreneurship is mainly driven by economic necessity, women also utilize their businesses to seek autonomy, empowerment, and social responsibility. Women employ resilient strategies such as peer mentoring, digital resilience, and informal financial networks despite financial exclusion, regulatory obstacles, cultural constraints, and time poverty. Key developments in gender agency, education, household well-being, and community perceptions of women's roles are also identified.

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INTRODUCTION

The empirical findings from our research on women entrepreneurship and its contribution to poverty reduction in developing countries are discussed in this chapter. This section explores the lived experiences, reasons, barriers, strategies, and socioeconomic outcomes of women entrepreneurs in some selected developing countries based on the intellectual foundations and research design outlined in the previous chapters. The primary aim of this empirical research is to translate theoretical knowledge into practical application by examining how women navigate entrepreneurship in environments with uncertain economies, inadequate institutional resources, and strongly embedded sociocultural traditions. In the process, the chapter seeks to provide an integrated understanding of how female entrepreneurship contributes toward poverty alleviation at both household and community levels (Hussain et al., 2019).

The main objective of the study, to explore and evaluate how female entrepreneurship can help alleviate poverty in developing countries, forms the basis of research. This focus stems from the broader realization derived in the literature review that entrepreneurship has the potential to be an active driver for empowerment and prosperity (Hussin & Aziz, 2021). Nonetheless, to date, there has been a paucity of empirical research on the exact mechanisms through which women engage in entrepreneurship and how these mechanisms tie to the impact of poverty. To fill that void, this chapter spotlights the diversity of experiences and complex interactions between socioeconomic determinants influencing entrepreneurial outcomes based on first-hand evidence from female entrepreneurs (Hussain et al., 2014).

To ensure the provision of both breadth and depth of analysis, the data upon which this chapter is based were gathered through a mix of qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative surveys. Surveys were administered to a sample of 300 female entrepreneurs from three regions of development: South Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The questionnaire aimed at collecting information regarding demographics, reasons for entrepreneurship, operational and financial challenges, performance metrics of the business, and perceived social impacts. To delve into the stories behind the numbers, 45 women from the same population

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