

A Systematic Literature Review and Research Objectives of Women Entrepreneurship and Supply Chain Management

Srilalitha M.K.

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Srinivas University, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

Introduction

Women entrepreneurship has increasingly become a critical force in economic growth and inclusive development, especially in emerging economies like India. The intersection of women-led enterprises and supply chain management presents both unique challenges and significant opportunities for transforming rural and urban economies. With growing recognition of the role women entrepreneurs can play in enhancing sustainability, innovation, and local resource utilization, academic and institutional interest in this field has intensified. However, despite numerous initiatives and scattered success stories, the structural integration of women entrepreneurs into formal and sustainable supply chains remains fragmented. This paper aims to systematically review the literature in this domain to identify trends, research gaps, and formulate key research objectives for future exploration, particularly in the Indian and rural Karnataka context.

Systematic Literature Review

The literature was reviewed under four categories, offering a comprehensive understanding of the status and challenges related to women entrepreneurship and supply chain management:

(i) Doctoral Research Conducted in India

Doctoral dissertations in India have examined women entrepreneurship from multiple dimensions—access to finance, training, market linkages, and gender roles. Some studies have also investigated women's participation in agricultural value chains and micro-enterprises. While these works acknowledge progress made through government schemes and SHGs, they also reveal the lack of formal supply chain networks for women entrepreneurs, especially in rural regions like the Malnad area of Karnataka. Most women continue to operate at a micro-scale without integration into upstream or downstream supply systems.

(ii) Studies by Institutions and Business Magazines

Reports by NITI Aayog, NABARD, and corporate publications such as Forbes India and Business Today have spotlighted female entrepreneurship initiatives and their linkages with MSMEs, e-commerce, and rural enterprise development. These documents highlight examples of women-led success stories in textiles, food processing, and handicrafts. However, they also stress the absence of scalable supply chain infrastructure that could elevate these enterprises to the next level. Studies suggest that women are often excluded from procurement policies and logistic networks due to lack of information, institutional support, or digital literacy.

(iii) Research Articles by Scholars Published in Journals and Magazines

Peer-reviewed journal articles have explored key themes such as the role of supply chains in improving business sustainability, the contribution of women entrepreneurs to local economies, and the constraints they face. Many researchers have underscored the importance of integrating women into sustainable supply chains through cooperative models, digital platforms, and value-added training. Yet, much of the research remains fragmented, with limited focus on region-specific challenges like those found in hilly or forested areas like Malnad.

(iv) Information from Websites of NGOs and Government Programs

Websites of prominent NGOs and government initiatives such as Startup India, PMEGP, MUDRA Yojana, and Rural Livelihood Missions offer valuable insight into real-world interventions aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs through supply chain support. These platforms present data on entrepreneurship training, market access programs, and digital toolkits. However, they also point to challenges such as poor implementation at the grassroots level, lack of logistics support, and inadequate aftercare or mentoring for first-generation women entrepreneurs.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing recognition of the role women entrepreneurs play in driving local economies and fostering inclusive growth, their integration into organized and sustainable supply chains remains limited—especially in rural and semi-rural regions such as Karnataka's Malnad belt. Women-owned businesses often face constraints such as limited access to logistics networks, poor market linkages, lack of training in supply chain practices, and minimal exposure to digital tools. Additionally, traditional gender roles, inadequate financial support, and institutional barriers prevent many rural women from scaling their entrepreneurial ventures beyond the micro-level.

Supply chain management, if effectively integrated, can act as a powerful enabler for women entrepreneurs—offering streamlined procurement, efficient inventory management, access to larger markets, and sustainability in operations. However, the absence of cohesive strategies, region-specific interventions, and policy support results in a widening gap between entrepreneurial potential and actual outcomes. There is a pressing need to explore how sustainable supply chain frameworks can be leveraged to enhance women entrepreneurship, particularly in the context of geographically diverse and economically transitional regions like Malnad.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this conceptual research study is to explore the potential and challenges of integrating sustainable supply chain management into women entrepreneurship in rural Karnataka, with a special focus on the Malnad region.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the current status of women entrepreneurship in India, Karnataka, and specifically the Malnad region.
2. To analyze the role of supply chain integration in enhancing the growth and sustainability of women-led enterprises.
3. To identify the key barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing and managing supply chains in rural areas.

Literature Review

Quagrainie et al. (2020) explored the relationship between women's micro-entrepreneurship and sustainable development, particularly in the context of income generation, social security, economic resource accessibility, and adaptability. Their findings from a survey of 171 women entrepreneurs indicated that micro-enterprises significantly contribute to achieving long-term sustainable development goals. The study also highlighted the mediating influence of cultural factors, suggesting that without addressing socio-cultural dimensions, sustainability outcomes may remain limited.

Sallah and Caesar (2021) examined the contribution of intangible resources to the success of women-owned businesses. Using a sample of 246 female entrepreneurs, the study found that resources such as skills, brand identity, and trust are essential drivers of success. Moreover, the moderating role of social competence was emphasized as a crucial enhancer of these resources.

Yoopetch (2020), focusing on the hospitality industry, identified the psychological and behavioral determinants of entrepreneurial intentions among women. The research, based on 416 female business owners, concluded that self-efficacy, empowerment, and a risk-taking attitude play significant roles in motivating women toward entrepreneurship. Among these, the willingness to take calculated risks emerged as the strongest influencer.

Rudhumbu et al. (2016) studied the barriers to women entrepreneurship in Botswana and reported that limited access to finance, inadequate training, competition, and marginalization were prominent challenges. The study emphasized the need for structured entrepreneurship education and accessible information on support resources to enhance women's participation in business.

Wang (2018) explored gender and ethnic diversity in the context of women entrepreneurs in the United States. Through American Community Survey data and qualitative interviews, the study revealed that balancing family responsibilities and business demands remains a significant challenge. The research proposed strategic negotiation as a tool to help women navigate societal expectations and business constraints.

Khokhar (2017) analyzed NSSO data to investigate factors driving women entrepreneurship in India. It was observed that female labor force participation, access to affordable credit, and involvement in decision-making significantly influenced entrepreneurial growth, while physical infrastructure did not play a major role.

Mand et al. (2019) assessed the impact of financial institutions on the development of women entrepreneurs in India. Based on data from 204 female entrepreneurs, the study highlighted that internal sources of financing had the most substantial impact, followed by education, family background, and access to formal bank financing.

Darrene et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between human capital elements and self-employment among female entrepreneurs. The study utilized data from both the *Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC)* and the *Current Population Survey (CPS)* covering the period from 1994 to 2006. The findings emphasized the significant importance of human capital in determining both salaried and self-employed women's economic roles. It was also observed that self-employed women adapted more quickly to changes in communication, construction, and manufacturing sectors when compared to their male counterparts. This highlighted the adaptive capabilities of women in non-traditional sectors.

Singh (2008) identified the major factors, challenges, and reasons influencing women entrepreneurship in India. The study brought to light persistent issues such as gender discrimination, lack of networking opportunities, male dominance, inappropriate perceptions of women in the entrepreneurial space, and the non-acceptance of successful women entrepreneurs in the community. Singh's study emphasized that for effective empowerment, ministries dealing with women's social and economic development must collaborate to synergize efforts. Additionally, it was recommended that the government should support small-scale businesses, rejuvenate existing institutional frameworks, and foster a winning spirit among aspiring women entrepreneurs.

Lall and Sahai (2008) conducted a comparative study examining the characteristics, challenges, and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and those involved in family-run businesses. Their research focused on identifying key psychographic and demographic factors, including levels of commitment, entrepreneurial hurdles, and future business expansion plans. Their study revealed that while family support plays a crucial role, factors like dedication and strategic vision significantly influenced the success trajectory of women entrepreneurs.

Rattan and Tajeddini (2018) conducted a systematic review of the global literature on female entrepreneurship. Their work highlighted a focus on entrepreneurial motivation, leadership behavior, and gender-based challenges in management. The review emphasized the importance of developing region-specific theories to reflect diverse entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Rani and Hashim (2019) studied Malaysian women entrepreneurs and found that traits such as creativity, self-confidence, innovation, and access to finance positively affected business outcomes. The study recommended focused training to enhance these personal and professional capacities.

Sengar (2020) carried out a field study in Jaipur and Ajmer, identifying key motivators for women entrepreneurs such as family encouragement and personal ambition. However, issues like societal pressure and mobility restrictions posed significant challenges. The research suggested greater policy support and peer mentorship.

Shamith (2021) analyzed the role of Digital India and Start-up India programs in fostering women entrepreneurship in Tamil Nadu. The study concluded that digital access had empowered many rural women to explore business opportunities. Nevertheless, it called for continued infrastructure and skill development support.

Bouzekraoui and Ferhane (2019) examined the state of women entrepreneurs in Morocco, outlining challenges such as limited funding, emotional stress, and difficulty balancing family with business responsibilities. The study advocated for stronger institutional support and inclusive financial policies.

Sorensson and Dalborg (2017) explored women's entry into male-dominated industries in Sweden. While opportunity-driven entrepreneurship was evident, barriers such as lack of economic support and gender stereotyping were persistent. The study stressed the need for enabling policies that promote inclusiveness in self-employment.

Kukkonen (2015) emphasized the entrepreneurial gender gap in European contexts and argued for educational reforms, inclusive mentorship networks, and gender-responsive policies to facilitate women's broader participation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Krishnamoorthy, V. and Balasubramani, R. (2014) identified the crucial factors influencing women's entrepreneurial motivation and its subsequent impact on success. Their study revealed that family support, ambition, skills and knowledge, market opportunities, independence, government subsidies, and personal satisfaction are all vital elements that encourage women to pursue entrepreneurship. They concluded that motivational and skill-based factors significantly impact the entrepreneurial success of women. This comprehensive understanding stresses the importance of both internal drivers and external support systems for women entrepreneurs.

Nehru and Bhardwaj (2013) examined the factors that inspire women to initiate their own ventures, along with the challenges they face while attempting to establish their position in a highly competitive business environment. The study highlighted that despite the increased motivation, women continue to struggle with societal and structural barriers in asserting their entrepreneurial identity.

Mellita, D. and Cholil, W. (2012) described the features and roles of e-commerce in advancing gender equality in a developing country context. Their study underlined that successful empowerment through e-commerce requires comprehensive gender analysis, strategic planning, inclusive design, effective

implementation, and consistent training. The study also emphasized the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and attention to the real-life impacts on women's socio-economic conditions.

Minniti, Maria (2009) provided extensive monographic reviews of women entrepreneurship across diverse academic disciplines such as psychology, economics, sociology, and anthropology. Her work delved into the multifaceted issues surrounding labor division and gender disparities in entrepreneurship. She emphasized the necessity for interdisciplinary approaches to fully understand and address the systemic barriers faced by women entrepreneurs.

Singh (2008) investigated the driving forces behind women's entrepreneurial ventures in India and discovered numerous hurdles associated with starting a business. These challenges were primarily linked to societal non-acceptance, limited networking with other successful women entrepreneurs, gender-based discrimination, reluctance by banks to extend business loans to women, lack of professional networks, and family obligations. His findings revealed the deeply rooted structural and cultural factors that impede women's entrepreneurial progress.

M. N. and Shar, Jan (2008) explored a broad spectrum of business opportunities available to women and examined how the development of entrepreneurial skills could empower them. Their research emphasized the potential of the cooperative sector in enhancing women's economic status. They also proposed several approaches for improving women's entrepreneurial capabilities through training, awareness, and structural support mechanisms.

This comprehensive set of studies highlights a recurring theme: while motivation and individual skills are essential, the external ecosystem—comprising policy support, societal attitudes, and access to technology—plays a pivotal role in shaping women's entrepreneurial journeys. The integration of supply chain management into these dynamics presents both a challenge and an opportunity to create inclusive and sustainable growth models, especially in rural regions like Karnataka's Malnad belt.

Findings of the Study

1. **Significant Role of Motivation and Skills:** Studies reveal that women's motivation—driven by ambition, family support, and the desire for independence—is a major factor in their entrepreneurial success. Skill development is a key enabler for sustainable enterprise growth.
2. **Challenges Persist:** Women entrepreneurs continue to face multifaceted challenges, including limited access to capital, gender-based discrimination, lack of training, societal non-acceptance, family responsibilities, and inadequate professional networks.
3. **Impact of E-commerce and Supply Chains:** E-commerce platforms and inclusive supply chains present transformative opportunities for women by expanding market access, reducing intermediary dependence, and enhancing competitiveness.
4. **Government and Institutional Support:** While government schemes are in place, awareness, accessibility, and effectiveness of these policies at the rural level remain inadequate. Systematic awareness programs and infrastructure improvements are essential.
5. **Need for Ecosystem Strengthening:** Entrepreneurial success is not merely an individual effort but also dependent on a supportive ecosystem that includes training, mentorship, peer networking, financial inclusion, and digital literacy.

Suggestions

1. **Promote Supply Chain Integration:** Encourage the participation of rural women in localized and decentralized supply chains through training, subsidies, and government-supported platforms.

2. **Enhance Access to Finance:** Simplify credit processes and provide collateral-free loans through SHGs and cooperative banks, especially tailored for first-generation women entrepreneurs.
3. **Expand Digital Literacy and E-Commerce Access:** Promote digital training programs to help women leverage e-commerce platforms and connect to broader supply chains.
4. **Create Women-Centric Industrial Clusters:** Establish women-led micro-enterprise clusters with common facility centers in rural areas to enable scalability and shared resources.
5. **Strengthen Social and Peer Support Systems:** Facilitate mentorship programs, women entrepreneur forums, and support networks that build confidence, share knowledge, and help manage both domestic and business responsibilities.

Conclusion

Integrating women entrepreneurship with sustainable supply chains is a promising pathway to achieving inclusive rural development in Karnataka. The review highlights that while individual motivation and family support are essential, institutional and structural support play a pivotal role in ensuring long-term success. E-commerce and digital platforms have the potential to bridge traditional barriers, but policy implementation at the grassroots level must be robust and gender-sensitive. A comprehensive ecosystem involving government, NGOs, private enterprises, and academia is critical to transforming rural women into resilient and competitive entrepreneurs. This alignment between entrepreneurship and supply chain development not only empowers women but also revitalizes rural economies through decentralized and sustainable value chains.

Scope for Further Research

1. A primary empirical study can be conducted across multiple districts in the Malnad region to examine region-specific challenges and successes in supply chain involvement.
2. A comparative study between digital entrepreneurs and traditional entrepreneurs among rural women could yield insights on the effectiveness of technological interventions.
3. Research on the role of SHGs and FPOs (Farmer Producer Organizations) in building women-led supply chain models can further enhance academic and policy discourse.

References

- Aggarwal, V. K., & Jain, S. (2014). Role of women entrepreneurs in 21st century India: Challenges and empowerment. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 2(9), 834–840.
- Al-Hossienie, C. A. (2011). Socio-economic impact of women entrepreneurship in Sylhet City, Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Development Research Working Paper Series*. http://www.bangladeshstudies.org/files/WPS_no12.pdf
- Anis, M. Z., & Hasan, M. M. (2013). Women entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises in Rajshahi area: Opportunities and challenges. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 3(8), 1–25.
- Ayogu, D. U., & Agu, E. O. (2015). Assessment of the contribution of women entrepreneurs towards entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review*, 3(10), 190–207.
- Barrett, M., & Moores, K. (2010). Looking anew at women's entrepreneurship: How the family firm context and a radical subjectivist view of economics helps reshape women's entrepreneurship research. *6th Workshop on Family Firms Management Research*, 1–17.
- Bhardwaj, G. N., Parashar, S., Pandey, B., & Sahu, P. (2010). Women entrepreneurship in India: Opportunities and challenges. *Research Paper*, 2(1), 1–9.
- Bharthvajan, R. (2014). Women entrepreneurs and problems of women entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology*, 3(9), 16104–16111.

- Bouzekraoul, H., & Ferhane, D. (2017). An exploratory study of women's entrepreneurship in Morocco. *Journal of Entrepreneurship: Research & Practice*, 1–19. <https://ibimapublishing.com/articles/JERP/2017/869458/869458.pdf>
- Bowen, D. D., & Hisrich, R. D. (1986). The female entrepreneur: A career development perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 11(2), 393–407.
- Bulsara, H. K., Chandwani, J., & Gandhi, S. (2014). Women entrepreneurship and innovations in India: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Innovation*, 2(1), 32–44.
- Chander, S., & Arora, D. D. (2013). Study of financial problems of women entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(4), 103–122.
- Cohoon, J. M., Wadhwa, V., & Lesa, M. (2010). The anatomy of an entrepreneur – Are successful women entrepreneurs different from men? *Kauffman Foundation of Entrepreneurship*. https://www.kauffman.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/successful_women_entrepreneurs_510.pdf
- Damvad. (2007). Women entrepreneurship – A Nordic perspective. *Nordic Innovation Centre*. <https://numerons.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/19women-entrepreneurshipe28093-a-nordic-perspective.pdf>
- Darrene, H., Harpel, E., & Mayer, H. (2008). Human capital and women's business ownership. *Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration*. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.164.9678&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Deo, M., Kalisa, F., & Theogene, H. (2016). The contribution of women entrepreneurship in family socio-economic development in rural areas, Rwanda. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology*, 7(6), 256–260.
- Deshpande, S., & Sethi, S. (2009). Women entrepreneurship in India: Problems, solutions and future prospects of development. *International Research Journal*, 2(9–10), 3–17.
- Dwibedi, L. (2015). Women entrepreneurship and innovations: A critical analysis. *Academic Voices*, 5(1), 16–21.
- Emile, L. (2011). Female entrepreneurship theory: A multidisciplinary review of resources. *Scientific Review Paper*, 1(2), 26–64.
- Fafaliou, I., & Ioannis, S. (2014). Analyze female entrepreneurship: Evidence from Greece. *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, 2(1), 21–38.
- Fazalbhoy, S. (2014). Women entrepreneurship as the way for economic development. *Annual Research Journal of SCMS*, 2(1), 117–127.
- G., M., et al. (2015). Major social issues faced by women entrepreneurs in Ernakulam district. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 3(2), 45–54.
- Gandhi, D., & Sharma, V. (2014). Women entrepreneurship: The emerging economic workforce in the century. *International Journal of Commerce, Business and Management*, 3(4), 543–551.
- Gautam, R. K., & Mishra, K. (2016). Study on rural women entrepreneurship in India: Issues and challenge. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 2(2), 33–36.
- Ghani, E., William, R. K., & Stephen, D. O. (2014). Political reservations and women's entrepreneurship in India. *Journal of Development Economics*, 108(C), 138–153.
- Goduscheit, R. C., & Maria, T. N. (2011). State of art in entrepreneurship research: A systematic academic review of recent research on entrepreneurship from a gender perspective. *Programme on Entrepreneurship Research, Norway*, 4(6), 1–23.
- Gopika, G., Remya, J., & Elsa, M. J. (2015). Women empowerment through entrepreneurship and its glitches: A theoretical approach. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 3(4), 2677–2679.
- Goyal, M., & Parkash, J. (2011). Women entrepreneurship in India – Problems and prospects. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(5), 195–207.
- Irene, K. (2013). Women entrepreneurs: We cannot have change unless we have men in the room. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 2(6), 1–17.

- Jamali, D. (2009). Constraints and opportunities facing women entrepreneurs in developing countries: A relational perspective. *Gender in Management*, 24(4), 232–251.
- Jarniou, C., et al. (2015). Perspectives on women entrepreneurship from a French-speaking context. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 98–106.
- Jit, R., & Bharti, A. (2016). Women entrepreneurs of India: Issues and challenges. *Journal of Management Sciences and Technology*, 3(3), 79–89.
- Johar, P. (2015). A study on women's performance, development, and challenges in entrepreneurship in Ghaziabad. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 6(4), 112–118.
- Johar, S. (2017). A study on the development of women entrepreneurship in Ghaziabad, UP, India. *International Journal of Applied and Pure Science and Agriculture*, 1(12), 75–82.
- Jorge, V. (2017). Feminization of entrepreneurship in developing countries? Evidence from GEM data. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive, Paper No. 79997*, 1–32.
- Kalim, A. (2016). Women entrepreneurship: Turning challenges into opportunities. *Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Business Management*, 1–23.
- Kar, B., Subudhi, R., & Kar, N. (2016). Gender-gap in entrepreneurship: A study on ideation, efficacy, planning differentiation measures. *Amity Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 1(1), 49–61.
- Kemkar, M., & Sharma, J. (2016). Women entrepreneurship: Factors leading to success of women-led enterprises. *Research Journal of Management Sciences*, 5(9), 46–50.
- Khokhar, A. S. (2019). What decides women entrepreneurship in India? *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, 5(2), 180–197.
- Krishnamoorthy, V., & Balasubramani, R. (2014). Motivational factors and their impact on women entrepreneurial success. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Environment Perspectives*, 3(1), 125–132.
- Kukkonen, E. (2017). Who's the boss? Female entrepreneurs: Differences between female and male entrepreneurs in Finland. *Bachelor's Thesis, Aalto University School of Business*. https://aaltodoc2.org.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/26035/bachelor_Kukkonen_Elena_2017.pdf
- Kumbhar, V. (2013). Some critical issues of women entrepreneurship in rural India. *European Academic Research*, 1(2), 185–192.
- Lall, M., & Sahai, S. (2008). Women in family business. Presented at *First Asian Invitational Conference on Family Business*, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. <https://newsletters.isb.edu/FamilyBusiness-Newsletter/File/FBConference2015-Report.pdf>
- M. N., & Shar, J. (2008). Empowering women through entrepreneurship: A study of cooperative economic sectors. *Journal of Rural Development*, 27(4), 401–412.
- Mellita, D., & Cholil, W. (2012). E-commerce and gender equality in developing countries. *International Journal of Gender and Development*, 1(1), 35–42.
- Minniti, M. (2009). Women entrepreneurship: A review across disciplines. *Foundations and Trends in Entrepreneurship*, 5(7–8), 497–621.
- Nehru, C., & Bhardwaj, P. (2013). Motivating factors and challenges for women entrepreneurs in competitive markets. *Asian Journal of Management Research*, 4(3), 67–76.
- Singh, R. (2008). Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India. *Journal of Business and Economic Studies*, 2(1), 55–64.