

Transitioning To Entrepreneurship: Personality Traits And Information Access Among Women Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

This research investigates how personality traits and access to information shape women's transition from domestic roles to financial independence through entrepreneurship in Kanpur District, India. Drawing on a quantitative design with 500 women entrepreneurs across retail, handicrafts, and service sectors, the analysis highlights that intrinsic factors—particularly risk orientation, decisiveness, independence, leadership, and open-mindedness—consistently outperform demographic determinants such as age, education, marital status, or experience. At the same time, systemic enablers like Internet access, legal clarity, mentorship, and training opportunities emerge as significant predictors of entrepreneurial outcomes, while general information access and funding perceptions play a lesser role. Cultural and linguistic perceptions also strongly influence performance, underscoring the importance of psychological as well as structural support. By integrating Trait Theory, Social Role Theory, the Resource-Based View, and Information Seeking Theory, this research offers a holistic framework for understanding women's entrepreneurship in semi-urban, patriarchal contexts. Findings carry implications for evidence-based policy, emphasizing the need to couple personality development with institutional reforms to foster inclusive and sustainable women's entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurship, Personality traits, Information access, Gender barriers, Financial independence

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a driver of growth, innovation, and employment (Audretsch & Thurik, 2001), yet it remains male-dominated due to gendered assumptions linking success to traditionally masculine traits such as risk-taking and assertiveness (Ahl, 2006; Bruni et al., 2004). These perceptions have historically marginalized women, especially in socio-cultural contexts where domestic roles prevail (Brush et al., 2009; Jamali, 2009). Although increasing numbers of women are now entering entrepreneurship, they continue to shoulder caregiving responsibilities and face systemic challenges such as cultural restrictions, biased credit practices, and weak institutional support (Carter & Shaw, 2006; Aterido et al., 2011). Despite these barriers, women entrepreneurs demonstrate resilience, with their ventures contributing not only to economic growth but also to gender equity and social progress (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Henry et al., 2016).

1.2 The Importance of Transitioning from Domestic Roles to Economic Independence

The move from domesticity to entrepreneurship reflects both individual empowerment and a societal redefinition of gender norms. Historically, women's informal and home-based labor was undervalued, while men dominated public economic roles (Baker et al., 1997). Although feminist movements have expanded women's access to education and employment (Mirchandani, 1999), structural inequities in finance, mobility, and training persist, particularly in developing contexts (Hisrich & Brush, 1984; Chaudhary & Verick, 2014). Entrepreneurship enables women to achieve financial autonomy, redefine identity, and contribute to intergenerational progress (UN Women, 2021), though their journeys remain constrained by economic, social, and psychological barriers.

1.3 Research Gap and Rationale

Current scholarship offers valuable insights but often neglects the lived experiences of women transitioning from domestic roles. Much literature privileges external enablers such as policy or finance, while overlooking internal drivers like personality traits (Lee & Kumari, 2019). Moreover, urban and Western contexts dominate empirical work, leaving semi-urban and patriarchal settings underexplored (Brush et al., 2009). This research addresses these gaps by examining how personality and information access shape entrepreneurial transitions among women in Kanpur District, a semi-urban region of India.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Women entrepreneurs moving from domestic roles face multidimensional barriers, including gender-biased finance, the dual burden of caregiving and enterprise, limited mentorship, and cultural stereotypes that erode credibility. Existing support structures remain fragmented, rarely integrating external barriers with internal

capacities. A holistic, gender-sensitive framework is essential to foster women's sustainable entrepreneurial growth.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To explore how different personality types among women entrepreneurs impact their business success and decision-making.
2. To identify the issues and problems women entrepreneurs face related to accessing and using business information.

1.6 Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in business outcomes among women entrepreneurs of different personality types.
2. The type of information sources accessed does not significantly affect the issues faced by women entrepreneurs.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The research is confined to Kanpur District, focusing on 500 women across retail, handicrafts, and services sectors, with variation in socio-economic, demographic, and marital backgrounds. Both focused and side entrepreneurs are included, though women outside entrepreneurial activity are excluded. A purely quantitative design strengthens statistical validity but limits subjective interpretation. Despite these delimitations, the research offers robust insights to guide inclusive policy and support strategies for women's entrepreneurship.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Women in Entrepreneurship

Women's participation in entrepreneurship has expanded globally, supported by education, policy initiatives, and shifting socio-cultural norms, with GEM reports highlighting a narrowing gender gap though disparities persist in developing economies such as India. Women-led enterprises significantly contribute to innovation and employment, particularly in emerging markets where their role is tied to poverty alleviation and social mobility. Yet, structural barriers—finance, networks, gendered norms, and work-life imbalance—continue to confine many to low-growth sectors (Greene et al., 2003; Kantor, 2002). Historically marginalized within informal activities (Brush et al., 2009; Baker et al., 1997), women have nonetheless achieved milestones, with leaders like Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and Vandana Luthra exemplifying resilience and innovation. In India, entrepreneurship is concentrated in culturally “acceptable” domains such as retail, food processing, and services (Dhaliwal, 2000), while government schemes like PMMY and Stand-Up India offer opportunities but face implementation gaps due to low awareness and rural outreach challenges (Sinha, 2017).

2.2 Personality Traits and Business Success

Entrepreneurial outcomes are shaped not only by external enablers but also by internal dispositions, with research linking personality traits to performance and decision-making. The Big Five model (Costa & McCrae, 1992) highlights openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability, each influencing creativity, planning, networking, and resilience (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). Traits such as risk-taking, proactivity, and independence enhance performance, while avoidance or indecision can limit outcomes, particularly in resource-scarce environments. Trait Theory underscores these innate characteristics as central to entrepreneurial behavior (Rauch & Frese, 2007). For women, the role of personality is magnified by systemic barriers, yet empirical evidence on the intersection of gender and personality remains limited in non-Western, patriarchal contexts—underscoring the rationale for this research's focus on Kanpur District.

2.3 Access to Business Information

Access to accurate, timely information is essential for opportunity recognition, risk management, and business growth. Entrepreneurs rely on formal sources (government portals, banks), informal networks (family, peers), and digital tools, yet women often face disadvantages due to digital divides, mobility restrictions, and exclusion from professional networks (Roomi & Parrott, 2008; McAdam, 2013). This “information poverty” limits not only access but also confidence in using information, especially in male-dominated sectors. While studies confirm that mentorship, digital literacy, and formal training enhance women's performance, reliance on second-hand or informal channels reduces competitiveness. Despite its centrality, the relationship between information access and entrepreneurial success remains underexplored in regional and sector-specific contexts, which this research addresses empirically.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This research draws on four complementary perspectives. Trait Theory emphasizes personality traits such as risk tolerance and self-efficacy as predictors of success (McClelland, 1961; Rauch & Frese, 2007). Social Role Theory

(Eagly & Wood, 2012) contextualizes how cultural norms and caregiving roles shape women's entrepreneurial choices. The Resource-Based View (RBV) positions information and networks as strategic resources influencing competitive advantage. Finally, Information Seeking and Use Theory (Wilson, 1999) explains patterns of access, relevance, and barriers in entrepreneurial contexts. Together, these frameworks integrate psychological, social, and strategic dimensions to analyze how internal traits and external resources interact with gender roles in shaping women's transition from domestic responsibilities to economic independence.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research employs a quantitative research design to generate structured, measurable, and statistically analyzable data. Such an approach is well-suited for identifying patterns, testing hypotheses, and deriving generalizable conclusions across large populations (Creswell, 2014). It facilitates the examination of causal relationships between variables such as personality traits, access to business information, and entrepreneurial success, all captured through numerical indicators. While qualitative methods provide depth, quantitative analysis ensures breadth, rigor, and policy relevance.

3.2 Sampling and Participants

3.2.1 Target Population

The research focuses on women entrepreneurs operating formal and semi-formal businesses in Kanpur District, Uttar Pradesh—a region that reflects both traditional and transitional gender norms in entrepreneurship.

3.2.2 Sampling Strategy

A stratified random sampling technique ensures heterogeneity, with strata defined by business size, geographic location (urban/semi-urban), personality type, and sector (retail, services, manufacturing, handicrafts). Random selection within each stratum reduces bias and enables subgroup comparisons.

3.2.3 Sample Size

A total of 500 women entrepreneurs are included, providing sufficient statistical power for regression and ANOVA analyses, and ensuring generalizability within the regional context.

3.2.4 Inclusion Criteria

Participants must be women aged 18+, managing or co-owning a business for at least 12 months, and willing to complete structured questionnaires.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data is collected through structured survey questionnaires featuring closed-ended items for standardization. Key dimensions include:

- **Access to Information:** sources, frequency, quality, and barriers.
- **Personality Traits:** assessed via the abbreviated Big Five Inventory.

Surveys are administered in Hindi and English, in both digital and paper formats, to ensure inclusivity.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Means, frequencies, and standard deviations summarize demographics, business characteristics, and personality profiles, providing a baseline understanding of the sample.

3.4.2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

One-way ANOVA tests whether significant differences exist in entrepreneurial outcomes across personality types.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The research upholds ethical integrity through informed consent, confidentiality, non-maleficence, and anonymity in reporting. Surveys are translated and back-translated to ensure accuracy across Hindi and English. All procedures were reviewed and approved by a university ethics committee, ensuring participants' rights and well-being.

4. RESULTS

4.1.1 Risk-Taking Personality Types

Risk-taking personality significantly predicts entrepreneurial success across all demographics. Age, location, education, marital status, and experience show no moderating effects, while number of children has an independent but weaker influence. In all cases, Calculated and Bold entrepreneurs consistently outperform Avoidant types, underscoring that behavioral disposition toward risk outweighs demographic factors in shaping outcomes.

4.1.2 Decision-Maker Entrepreneurs

Decision-making style strongly influences performance, with Prompt and Timely decision-makers consistently outperforming Indecisive, Deliberate, and Situational types. Age, location, marital status, and experience show no effect, while education and number of children have independent significance but do not alter the impact of decision-making. Quick, decisive action thus emerges as a key driver of entrepreneurial success.

4.1.3 Independent Entrepreneurs

Independence proves a significant predictor of success across all groups, with Independent and Self-Reliant women consistently outperforming Dependent and Team-Oriented types. Demographic variables, including age, location, education, marital status, and experience, show no significant effects, though number of children exerts some independent influence. Initiative and autonomy clearly outweigh structural or demographic variables in determining outcomes.

4.1.4 Leadership Entrepreneurs

Leadership style is a consistent determinant of entrepreneurial performance. Proactive, Active, and Accepting leaders significantly outperform Avoidant and Supportive types across all demographic categories. Neither age, location, education, marital status, nor experience alters this relationship, though number of children shows independent effects. Strong leadership capabilities thus prove more critical than structural attributes for women entrepreneurs.

4.1.5 Open-Minded Entrepreneurs

Open-mindedness enhances entrepreneurial performance regardless of demographic context. “Willing” entrepreneurs significantly outperform “Resistant” counterparts across age, location, education, marital status, number of children, and experience, with education and family size showing some independent effects. Personality openness emerges as a robust predictor of outcomes, independent of external conditions.

4.2.1 Information Access of Entrepreneurs

Access to information does not significantly influence performance across demographics, except that number of children independently affects outcomes. These findings suggest that while conceptually important, information access alone does not drive success without accompanying support systems.

4.2.2 Internet Access of Entrepreneurs

Internet access significantly predicts entrepreneurial outcomes across all demographics, while age, location, marital status, and experience show no moderating effect. Education enhances performance independently but does not interact with Internet access. Digital inclusion is therefore central to equitable entrepreneurial growth.

4.2.3 Legal Navigation of Entrepreneurs

Legal regulatory clarity strongly influences performance across all demographics, with simpler legal environments yielding better outcomes. None of the demographic factors moderate this effect, though number of children independently impacts results. Streamlined regulatory frameworks are thus essential for enabling women’s entrepreneurship.

4.2.4 Mentorship Gap of Entrepreneurs

Access to mentorship consistently predicts better entrepreneurial outcomes. Entrepreneurs with even limited mentorship outperform those facing severe barriers, regardless of age, location, education, marital status, or experience. Number of children exerts some independent effect, but mentorship access remains universally beneficial.

4.2.5 Language Barriers of Entrepreneurs

Although not always statistically significant, perceived language barriers correlate with lower performance across all demographics. Entrepreneurs who view language as irrelevant consistently outperform those perceiving it as restrictive, suggesting that perception of linguistic constraints undermines success more than demographic factors.

4.2.6 Network Limitations of Entrepreneurs

Perceptions of professional network accessibility significantly influence outcomes, with entrepreneurs viewing networks as universally available performing better. Education and number of children show some independent or moderating effects, but overall, network perception outweighs demographic influences in determining performance.

4.2.7 Information Challenges of Entrepreneurs

Perceived information barriers consistently and significantly hinder performance across all demographics. Entrepreneurs reporting no challenges outperform others regardless of age, education, marital status, family size, or experience, highlighting the critical role of transparent, accessible information systems.

4.2.8 Growth Hindrance of Entrepreneurs

Perceived restrictive access to information reduces entrepreneurial performance across demographics, with number of children showing a moderating effect. Entrepreneurs perceiving access as surmountable or barrier-free consistently perform better, indicating that perceptions of growth barriers substantially affect outcomes.

4.2.9 Training Difficulties of Entrepreneurs

Accessible training strongly predicts higher performance across demographics, while age, location, education, marital status, number of children, and experience exert limited or minor interaction effects. Entrepreneurs perceiving training as accessible consistently outperform those viewing it as restrictive, stressing the importance of inclusive, affordable training programs.

4.2.10 Funding Difficulties of Entrepreneurs

Perceptions of funding barriers show limited influence on performance across demographics. Even when ANOVA reveals statistical significance, post hoc tests confirm no consistent differences, suggesting that funding perception plays a less decisive role in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes compared to other constraints.

4.2.11 Cultural Barriers and Entrepreneurial Performance

Cultural barriers consistently and significantly undermine entrepreneurial performance, irrespective of demographics. Entrepreneurs perceiving barriers as major perform worse than those viewing them as minor or negligible. Family size independently influences outcomes, but cultural perception remains the stronger determinant. Addressing cultural constraints is therefore vital for entrepreneurial empowerment.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings reinforce existing literature highlighting the primacy of personality traits in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes, particularly risk orientation, decision-making agility, independence, leadership, and open-mindedness. Consistent with Trait Theory (Rauch & Frese, 2007), these behavioral dispositions outweigh demographic variables such as age, education, marital status, or experience, suggesting that entrepreneurship is fundamentally personality-driven rather than structurally predetermined. Unexpectedly, factors like education and family size showed independent but limited effects, indicating that formal credentials or household responsibilities influence outcomes only marginally compared to intrinsic traits.

Equally notable is the role of information ecology. While general access to business information did not significantly predict outcomes, Internet accessibility, legal navigation, mentorship availability, and training opportunities emerged as strong determinants. This aligns with the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), which emphasizes the strategic value of intangible resources. Conversely, perceptions of language, cultural, and network barriers revealed that subjective interpretations of constraints can be as consequential as the barriers themselves—underscoring the importance of reframing and support mechanisms.

These results carry significant implications for policy and practice. Interventions should prioritize personality development through training in decision-making, leadership, and resilience, while simultaneously addressing systemic obstacles in information flows, digital infrastructure, legal processes, and mentorship networks. Policies that integrate psychological empowerment with structural reforms can create enabling ecosystems that foster women's transition from domestic roles to financial independence.

6. CONCLUSION

This research examined how personality traits and access to information influence women's transition from domestic roles to entrepreneurial independence, focusing on 500 women entrepreneurs in Kanpur District. The findings confirm that intrinsic factors—particularly risk orientation, decision-making agility, independence, leadership, and open-mindedness—consistently outweigh demographic variables in predicting entrepreneurial success. Equally, systemic elements such as Internet access, legal clarity, mentorship, training availability, and cultural perceptions significantly shape outcomes, while general information access alone proves less decisive.

The research contributes to academic discourse by integrating psychological, socio-cultural, and structural dimensions into a holistic model of women's entrepreneurship, addressing gaps in literature that often overlook non-Western, semi-urban contexts. Practically, it underscores the need for policies that couple personality development with structural support, advancing both gender equity and economic growth. Limitations include the exclusive use of quantitative methods, regional confinement to Kanpur, and sectoral focus on retail, handicrafts, and services, which may restrict broader generalizability.

Future research should expand to longitudinal and cross-regional studies, incorporate qualitative insights to capture lived experiences, and explore digital ecosystems, cultural integration, and personality development interventions as levers for empowering women entrepreneurs in diverse socio-economic settings.

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