# Psychological Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Intentions among Women: A Review

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### *Abstract*

This paper explores the relationship between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women, examining various contextual factors influencing this dynamic. Drawing on empirical studies and case analyses from diverse global contexts, the study highlights key dimensions of psychological empowerment—such as self-efficacy, autonomy, and meaningful work—and their impact on women's readiness to pursue entrepreneurship. Recommendations include enhancing financial access through microfinance and grants, promoting entrepreneurial education and training, implementing supportive policy frameworks, and leveraging technology and community networks. Addressing socio-cultural barriers and supporting diverse groups are also crucial for fostering an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Ultimately, by implementing these strategies, policymakers and stakeholders can create an enabling environment that empowers women entrepreneurs, promotes economic growth, and advances gender equality.

***Keywords****: psychological empowerment, entrepreneurial intentions, women entrepreneurs, socio-cultural factors,*

## Introduction

Psychological empowerment refers to an individual's belief in their ability to control their work and environment, and their sense of competence and impact. Entrepreneurial intentions, on the other hand, reflect an individual's readiness and inclination to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This review explores the relationship between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women, considering various contexts and factors influencing this relationship.

## Introduction

In recent years, the concept of psychological empowerment among women has gained significant attention in the context of entrepreneurship. Psychological empowerment refers to an individual's sense of control over their work environment, including feelings of competence, autonomy, and

the ability to impact their surroundings positively (Spreitzer, 1995). This empowerment is crucial for fostering entrepreneurial intentions, which reflect an individual's readiness and inclination to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015).

Entrepreneurship, particularly among women, has been recognized as a pathway to economic independence, empowerment, and societal change. Women entrepreneurs not only contribute to economic growth but also challenge traditional gender roles and empower other women through their leadership and success (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). However, women often face unique challenges in entrepreneurship, including gender biases, limited access to resources such as funding and networks, and societal expectations regarding their roles in business and family (Brush et al., 2006).

Understanding the relationship between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women is critical for developing policies and interventions that support women's entrepreneurship effectively. By enhancing psychological empowerment—through fostering self-efficacy, autonomy, and a sense of purpose—women are more likely to perceive themselves as capable entrepreneurs and pursue entrepreneurial ventures despite challenges (Luthans & Jensen, 2002).

This review explores the dynamic interplay between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women, examining how these constructs are influenced by socio-cultural factors, organizational environments, and individual experiences. By synthesizing existing literature and case studies, this review aims to provide insights into the mechanisms through which psychological empowerment enhances women's entrepreneurial aspirations and contributes to broader socio-economic empowerment.

## Objectives of the Review

1. To explore the dimensions and components of psychological empowerment relevant to women in entrepreneurship.
2. To investigate factors influencing women's readiness and inclination to engage in entrepreneurial activities.
3. To analyze empirical evidence on how psychological empowerment influences women's entrepreneurial intentions in different contexts.
4. To identify and discuss socio-cultural, organizational, and personal factors that hinder or facilitate women's psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions.

This review contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the importance of psychological empowerment in shaping women's entrepreneurial journeys and advocating for inclusive strategies that empower women economically and socially through entrepreneurship. By understanding these dynamics, stakeholders can develop targeted interventions that create a supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs to thrive and contribute to sustainable economic development.

In the subsequent sections, we delve into the dimensions of psychological empowerment, explore empirical studies on entrepreneurial intentions among women, analyze case studies illustrating

these concepts, and discuss implications for policy and practice. Through this comprehensive examination, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of how psychological empowerment influences women's entrepreneurial aspirations and outcomes.

## Psychological Empowerment: Concepts and Dimensions

Psychological empowerment is a multi-dimensional construct that captures an individual's intrinsic motivation and perceived control over their work environment, significantly shaping women's entrepreneurial intentions. These intentions, reflecting a readiness and inclination to engage in entrepreneurial activities, are influenced by the key concepts and dimensions of psychological empowerment. Intrinsic motivation, a core aspect of psychological empowerment, enhances one's sense of purpose and passion for their work, driving women to pursue entrepreneurial ventures with enthusiasm and commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Perceived control, another critical concept, involves a heightened sense of control over one's environment and decisions, empowering women to navigate challenges, make strategic decisions, and shape their businesses' directions confidently (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Central to psychological empowerment is self-efficacy, or the belief in one's capabilities to achieve goals. High self-efficacy motivates women to take entrepreneurial risks, persist in the face of obstacles, and innovate, which is crucial for entrepreneurial success (Bandura, 1997). Psychological empowerment comprises four primary dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Meaning refers to the value and significance an individual attaches to their work, aligning it with their personal beliefs and values (Spreitzer, 1995). For women, engaging in entrepreneurial activities that resonate with their values enhances motivation and commitment, driving greater entrepreneurial intent. Competence involves an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks successfully and effectively. High competence or self-efficacy leads women to feel capable of starting and managing a business, crucial for overcoming challenges and achieving entrepreneurial success.

Self-determination, the sense of having control over one's actions and decisions, is a critical motivator for entrepreneurship. Women who perceive high levels of self-determination are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, seeking independence and control over their work lives (Spreitzer, 1995). Impact, the degree to which an individual believes they can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work, is another vital dimension. The perception of making a meaningful impact through their business can drive women to engage in entrepreneurship, reflecting their desire to effect change and contribute to their community or industry (Spreitzer, 1995).

These dimensions of psychological empowerment do not operate in isolation but interact to create a holistic sense of empowerment that influences women's entrepreneurial intentions. For instance, a woman who finds her work meaningful and feels competent is more likely to feel motivated and capable of starting a business. Similarly, having control over decisions and perceiving a significant impact reinforces her confidence and drive to pursue entrepreneurial activities. Understanding and

fostering these dimensions of psychological empowerment can create environments that support and encourage women's entrepreneurial aspirations. This holistic approach to empowerment not only enhances individual motivation and confidence but also contributes to broader socio-economic development by enabling more women to engage in and succeed in entrepreneurial ventures.

Entrepreneurial intentions refer to an individual's motivation and plan to start a new business or engage in entrepreneurial activities. Among women, these intentions are shaped by a combination of personal aspirations, socio-economic factors, and contextual influences. Several key factors play a critical role in determining entrepreneurial intentions among women, including perceived behavioral control, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and perceived opportunities.

**Perceived Behavioral Control** involves a woman's belief in her capability to successfully start and manage a business despite potential obstacles. This belief is closely linked to self-efficacy and competence, dimensions of psychological empowerment that influence confidence and the perceived ability to execute entrepreneurial tasks (Bandura, 1997). Women who believe they have the skills and resources necessary for entrepreneurship are more likely to develop strong entrepreneurial intentions.

**Attitudes towards Entrepreneurship** reflect the degree to which women perceive entrepreneurship as a desirable and viable career path. Positive attitudes are fostered by exposure to successful role models, entrepreneurial education, and positive experiences in entrepreneurial activities. When women view entrepreneurship as an attractive and rewarding option, their intentions to pursue entrepreneurial ventures are strengthened (Ajzen, 1991).

**Subjective Norms** pertain to the social pressures and expectations that influence women's entrepreneurial intentions. These norms are shaped by family, friends, and society at large. In many cultures, traditional gender roles and societal expectations can either hinder or support women's entrepreneurial aspirations. Supportive networks and encouragement from significant others can play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial intentions among women (Shinnar, Giacomin, & Janssen, 2012).

**Perceived Opportunities** involve the recognition of favorable conditions and market gaps that can be exploited through entrepreneurship. Women who can identify and assess business opportunities are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions. Access to information, market insights, and resources enhances the ability to perceive and act on entrepreneurial opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

Women's entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by a combination of these factors, each interacting with the dimensions of psychological empowerment. For example, a woman with high self-determination and perceived control is more likely to overcome socio-cultural barriers and pursue entrepreneurship. Additionally, educational programs, mentorship, and supportive policies can enhance women's psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions by addressing skill gaps and providing necessary resources.

Understanding the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among women is essential for developing effective interventions and support mechanisms. By fostering an environment that

enhances psychological empowerment, supports positive attitudes, and provides access to resources and networks, we can significantly boost women's entrepreneurial intentions and their subsequent success in entrepreneurial ventures.

## The Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Intentions

The relationship between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women is profound and multifaceted. Psychological empowerment, comprising dimensions such as meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, directly influences a woman's confidence, motivation, and perceived ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This empowerment plays a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions, which reflect a woman's readiness and inclination to start and manage a business.

**Enhanced Self-Efficacy and Competence**: Psychological empowerment enhances women's self-efficacy, or their belief in their abilities to perform tasks successfully. Women who feel competent and capable are more likely to develop strong entrepreneurial intentions. This sense of competence, a key dimension of psychological empowerment, enables women to envision themselves as successful entrepreneurs, willing to take risks and navigate challenges (Bandura, 1997). Comparative studies have shown that women with higher self-efficacy are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than those with lower self-efficacy, indicating the crucial role of competence in fostering entrepreneurial intentions (Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007).

**Autonomy and Decision-Making**: Self-determination, another dimension of psychological empowerment, is crucial for fostering entrepreneurial intentions. Women who experience a high degree of autonomy and control over their decisions are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship. The freedom to make independent choices and the ability to influence one's work environment empower women to embark on entrepreneurial ventures (Spreitzer, 1995). Comparative analysis with male entrepreneurs indicates that while both genders value autonomy, women often place a higher emphasis on self-determination as a motivator for entrepreneurship, highlighting its unique significance in female entrepreneurial intentions (DeTienne & Chandler, 2007).

**Meaningful Work and Impact**: Women who perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with their personal values are more motivated to create businesses that reflect these values. This dimension of meaning in psychological empowerment drives women to pursue entrepreneurial activities that are personally fulfilling and socially impactful. Additionally, the perception of making a significant impact through their entrepreneurial efforts can further enhance their intentions to start a business (Spreitzer, 1995). Studies comparing social and commercial entrepreneurs have found that women are more likely to pursue social entrepreneurship, driven by the desire to create meaningful social impact, underscoring the importance of this dimension (Hechavarria, Terjesen, & Ingram, 2012).

**Barriers and Challenges**: Despite the positive influence of psychological empowerment, women often face socio-cultural barriers that can inhibit their entrepreneurial intentions. Gender biases, limited access to resources, and societal expectations can pose significant challenges. However, empowered women are better equipped to overcome these obstacles, leveraging their enhanced self-efficacy, autonomy, and sense of impact to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape (Brush et al., 2006). Comparative analysis across different cultural contexts reveals that while psychological

empowerment is universally beneficial, its impact on entrepreneurial intentions is more pronounced in cultures with higher gender equality and support for female entrepreneurship (Aidis, Estrin, & Mickiewicz, 2008).

In conclusion, psychological empowerment significantly influences women's entrepreneurial intentions by enhancing their self-efficacy, autonomy, and motivation to pursue meaningful and impactful work. Empowered women are more likely to perceive themselves as capable entrepreneurs, ready to take on the challenges of starting and managing a business. Addressing socio-cultural barriers and providing supportive environments that foster psychological empowerment can further enhance women's entrepreneurial intentions, contributing to greater gender parity in entrepreneurship and broader socio-economic development. Comparative analyses underline the importance of psychological empowerment across different contexts, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions that consider cultural and gender-specific factors.

## Contextual Factors Influencing Psychological Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Intentions

The relationship between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women is significantly influenced by various contextual factors, including socio-cultural, economic, institutional, and environmental elements. These factors shape the conditions under which women develop their entrepreneurial aspirations and the extent to which they feel empowered to pursue these intentions.

**Socio-Cultural Factors**: Societal norms and cultural attitudes towards gender roles play a crucial role in shaping women's psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions. In cultures with traditional gender roles, women may face more significant challenges in developing entrepreneurial intentions due to societal expectations and limited support for women in business (Brush et al., 2006). Conversely, societies that promote gender equality and support women's participation in the workforce create a more conducive environment for women's entrepreneurship. This thematic analysis reveals that cultural attitudes towards women significantly impact their perceived self-efficacy and autonomy, essential components of psychological empowerment.

**Economic Factors**: Economic conditions, such as access to capital, financial independence, and economic stability, greatly influence women's ability to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Women often face more considerable difficulties in securing funding and resources compared to their male counterparts, which can hinder their entrepreneurial intentions (Marlow & Patton, 2005). Economic empowerment through access to financial resources and support systems can enhance women's psychological empowerment by increasing their competence and perceived control over their entrepreneurial endeavors.

**Institutional Factors**: Institutional support, including governmental policies, educational opportunities, and entrepreneurial training programs, plays a pivotal role in fostering psychological empowerment among women. Governments and organizations that implement policies to support female entrepreneurship, such as providing grants, mentorship programs, and business development services, help enhance women's self-efficacy and autonomy (Minniti & Arenius, 2003). The thematic analysis highlights that institutional support is critical in creating an enabling environment for women to develop strong entrepreneurial intentions.

**Environmental Factors**: The broader environmental context, including technological advancements, market dynamics, and industry trends, also affects women's entrepreneurial intentions. Rapid technological changes and access to digital tools can empower women by providing new opportunities for business innovation and market entry (Ahl, 2006). The entrepreneurial ecosystem, characterized by supportive networks, access to information, and collaborative platforms, significantly impacts women's ability to perceive and act on entrepreneurial opportunities.

**Intersectional Factors**: Intersectionality, considering factors such as race, class, and education level, further influences psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women. Women from marginalized communities may face compounded barriers that affect their entrepreneurial pursuits. Addressing these intersectional challenges through targeted interventions can enhance psychological empowerment across diverse groups of women (Crenshaw, 1989).

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of contextual factors influencing psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women underscores the importance of a supportive and inclusive environment. Socio-cultural, economic, institutional, and environmental elements collectively shape women's entrepreneurial journeys. By addressing these factors through comprehensive policies and support systems, we can foster an ecosystem that enhances psychological empowerment and encourages entrepreneurial intentions among women, contributing to broader socio-economic development and gender equality in entrepreneurship.

## Case Studies and Examples

Case studies exploring the relationship between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women provide valuable insights into how various factors interact to influence women's entrepreneurial journeys. These case studies, drawn from diverse contexts, reveal recurring themes and highlight the critical dimensions of psychological empowerment that drive women towards entrepreneurship.

**Case Study 1: Women Entrepreneurs in Rural India**: A study of women entrepreneurs in rural India showcases the transformative impact of self-help groups (SHGs) and microfinance on psychological empowerment. These women, initially limited by socio-cultural constraints and lack of financial resources, experienced a significant boost in self-efficacy and autonomy through participation in SHGs. The collective support, access to microloans, and entrepreneurial training provided by these groups enhanced their competence and self-determination, enabling them to start and manage small businesses successfully (Kabeer, 2005). Thematic analysis of this case highlights the importance of community support and financial inclusion in fostering psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among rural women.

**Case Study 2: Women Tech Entrepreneurs in Urban Kenya**: In urban Kenya, a case study of women tech entrepreneurs illustrates the critical role of technological empowerment in enhancing entrepreneurial intentions. These women leveraged digital platforms and tech incubators to gain technical skills, business acumen, and access to global markets. The empowerment through technology not only increased their perceived competence and control over their business ventures but also allowed them to make a meaningful impact in their communities by addressing local challenges through innovative tech solutions (Ndemo & Weiss, 2017). This case underscores the

significance of technology and innovation in empowering women and promoting entrepreneurship in urban settings.

**Case Study 3: Female Social Entrepreneurs in the United States**: Examining female social entrepreneurs in the United States reveals the influence of personal values and the desire to create social impact on entrepreneurial intentions. These women often start social enterprises driven by a strong sense of purpose and the need to address societal issues. Psychological empowerment in this context is characterized by high levels of meaning and impact, as these entrepreneurs feel their work aligns with their personal values and makes a significant difference in society. Supportive ecosystems, including mentorship programs and social enterprise incubators, further enhance their self-efficacy and autonomy (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010). The thematic analysis of this case highlights the role of purpose-driven entrepreneurship and supportive ecosystems in fostering psychological empowerment.

**Case Study 4: Women in Family Businesses in China**: A study of women in family businesses in China illustrates how traditional family structures and cultural expectations can both hinder and enhance psychological empowerment. While some women face constraints due to patriarchal norms, others gain empowerment through their roles in family businesses, which provide opportunities for leadership and decision-making. The dual influence of family support and cultural expectations shapes their entrepreneurial intentions, with those receiving familial encouragement experiencing higher self-efficacy and autonomy (Jing, 2012). This case emphasizes the complex interplay between cultural norms and family dynamics in influencing women's psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions.

In conclusion, these case studies collectively highlight key themes that influence psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions among women: community support and financial inclusion, technological empowerment, purpose-driven entrepreneurship, and the interplay of cultural norms and family dynamics. Understanding these themes through thematic analysis provides a comprehensive view of how various factors contribute to women's empowerment and entrepreneurial success. By addressing these factors through targeted interventions and supportive policies, we can create an enabling environment that fosters psychological empowerment and encourages entrepreneurial intentions among women across diverse contexts.

**Recommendations and Conclusion**

To foster female entrepreneurship, it is crucial to enhance women's psychological empowerment by addressing various contextual factors identified in empirical studies. Firstly, improving access to financial resources through microfinance, low-interest loans, and grants can significantly boost women's confidence and competence to start and manage businesses (Kabeer, 2005; Marlow & Patton, 2005). Educational and training programs focusing on entrepreneurship, business management, and technical skills, as well as soft skills like leadership and networking, are essential for preparing women to navigate entrepreneurial challenges (Wilson et al., 2007). Supportive policies and institutional frameworks that create favorable regulatory environments, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and offer tax incentives for women-owned businesses can enhance women's autonomy and control over their ventures (Minniti & Arenius, 2003). Additionally, providing access to technology and digital tools, along with establishing tech incubators and innovation hubs,

can expand women's market reach and business opportunities (Ndemo & Weiss, 2017). Strengthening networks and communities through mentorship programs, networking events, and peer support groups is vital for offering role models, advice, and encouragement (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010).

Addressing socio-cultural barriers by promoting gender equality and challenging traditional gender norms through awareness campaigns and educational initiatives is also necessary (Ahl, 2006). Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds, including those in rural areas and minority communities, and providing targeted interventions can ensure inclusive support for all women (Jing, 2012). These measures, derived from case studies in various global contexts, highlight the importance of financial access, technological empowerment, social impact, and the interplay of family dynamics and cultural expectations in enhancing women's psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions. By implementing these recommendations, policymakers, organizations, and communities can create a supportive ecosystem that empowers women, fosters entrepreneurial intentions, and contributes to broader socio-economic development and gender equality.

The recommendations outlined above highlight crucial strategies to enhance women's psychological empowerment and foster entrepreneurial intentions. By addressing financial barriers through microfinance and grants, providing comprehensive entrepreneurial education and training, and creating supportive policy frameworks, governments and organizations can significantly boost women's confidence and competence to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, facilitating access to technology, establishing innovation hubs, and strengthening community networks are essential in expanding women's market opportunities and fostering innovation. Addressing socio-cultural barriers through gender equality initiatives and tailored support for diverse groups ensures inclusivity and equity in entrepreneurship. These measures, grounded in empirical studies and case analyses from various global contexts, underscore the importance of a supportive ecosystem in empowering women, driving entrepreneurial intentions, and advancing socio-economic development and gender equality. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can create a conducive environment where women thrive as entrepreneurs, contributing to vibrant economies and inclusive societies worldwide.

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