

---

## The Role of Socio-Economic Support Systems in Promoting Women Entrepreneurs' Sustainability

<sup>1</sup>P. Sangeetha, <sup>2</sup>Dr. K. Geetha

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professors, Department of Commerce,  
M. A. K. College of Arts and Science for Women,  
Manamadurai Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professors, Department of Commerce,  
Palaniaandavar College of Arts and Culture,  
Palani, Tamil Nadu, India

### Abstract

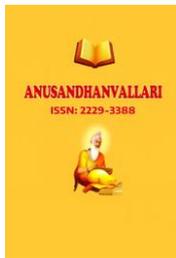
The sustainability of women entrepreneurs is integral to inclusive economic growth and reducing societal inequalities, with socio-economic support systems playing a pivotal role. This study examines the impact of financial services, mentorship programs, and community networks on the sustainability of women-owned enterprises, using data from 144 women entrepreneurs in diverse socio-economic settings. A structured survey captured variables such as access to financial support, mentorship participation, community engagement, and business sustainability indicators, including revenue stability and business longevity. Findings revealed that financial support systems, such as microcredit programs and grants, significantly enhance business stability and growth. Mentorship and training programs were found to improve entrepreneurial resilience, business management skills, and adaptability to market fluctuations. Community and familial networks emerged as critical non-financial resources, providing emotional support, resource sharing, and localized market access. However, systemic barriers, including limited access to formal support systems, were identified as challenges. The study highlights the multifaceted contributions of socio-economic support systems, where financial services address capital needs, mentorship fosters skill development, and community networks offer culturally sensitive support. The findings underscore the need for integrated strategies that combine financial, educational, and community-driven initiatives to promote entrepreneurial sustainability. Policymakers and practitioners are encouraged to develop tailored programs to strengthen formal financial structures, expand mentorship networks, and enhance community engagement. Addressing systemic gaps is imperative to fostering long-term entrepreneurial resilience and achieving sustainable growth. Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of these support systems on entrepreneurial performance and broader socio-economic development.

**Keywords:** women entrepreneurs, socio-economic support, financial systems, mentorship, community networks, sustainability, resilience.

---

### Introduction

Women entrepreneurs play a transformative role in fostering inclusive economic growth and addressing socio-economic inequalities. Their entrepreneurial endeavors not only contribute to GDP but also stimulate innovation, enhance household welfare, and generate employment opportunities, particularly in marginalized communities. According to Brush, De Bruin, and Welter (2019), women-owned enterprises are a significant driver of economic and social progress, often operating in diverse industries that cater to unmet market needs.



However, the sustainability of these enterprises remains vulnerable due to systemic barriers, including inequitable access to financial resources, limited mentorship opportunities, and socio-cultural constraints. These challenges, compounded by institutional biases and discriminatory practices, create an environment where women entrepreneurs struggle to achieve long-term business stability and growth (Kelley et al., 2020).

Socio-economic support systems, encompassing financial services, mentorship programs, and community networks, have been identified as critical to overcoming these barriers. Financial support systems such as microcredit programs and grants address immediate capital needs, yet women frequently encounter obstacles in accessing these resources due to inadequate collateral and discriminatory lending practices (UN Women, 2021). Mentorship and training programs, which are instrumental in fostering entrepreneurial resilience and innovation, are often inaccessible to women, particularly those in patriarchal or resource-constrained environments (OECD, 2020). Similarly, community and familial networks provide emotional and logistical support, but their efficacy is limited in compensating for the absence of formal systems. This interplay of challenges highlights the need for a holistic examination of how socio-economic support systems collectively influence the sustainability of women entrepreneurs.

The objectives of this study are twofold: to investigate the role of financial, mentorship, and community support systems in promoting entrepreneurial sustainability and to identify systemic barriers that hinder women's access to these resources. This research hypothesizes that consistent access to financial support correlates positively with revenue stability and business growth. Furthermore, it posits that participation in mentorship and training programs enhances entrepreneurial resilience by equipping women with the skills and adaptability needed to navigate market fluctuations (GEM, 2021). Finally, the study examines the contribution of community and familial networks, hypothesizing that these non-financial systems offer critical emotional and logistical support that complements formal mechanisms. However, the study also anticipates identifying significant gaps in access to these support systems, stemming from both institutional and socio-cultural constraints. Guiding this research are key questions aimed at elucidating the relationships between socio-economic support systems and entrepreneurial outcomes. These include: What is the relationship between access to financial support systems and the sustainability of women-owned businesses? How do mentorship and training programs influence entrepreneurial resilience? What role do community and familial networks play in sustaining women entrepreneurs? Finally, what systemic barriers limit women's access to socio-economic support systems? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to provide actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and academic scholars, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The significance of this study extends beyond academic inquiry to practical applications in policy and development initiatives. Findings will inform the design of gender-sensitive programs that address the unique needs of women entrepreneurs, fostering sustainable growth and resilience. As Brush et al. (2019) emphasize, a gender-aware approach to entrepreneurship is essential for creating inclusive economies. By highlighting the interdependence of financial, mentorship, and community systems, this study offers a robust framework for supporting women entrepreneurs in diverse socio-economic contexts. The results will not only empower women entrepreneurs but also catalyse broader socio-economic development by addressing structural inequities and promoting sustainable business practices.

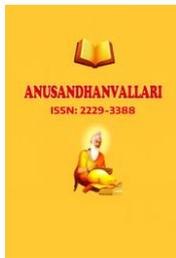
### The Survey

The Likert scale questionnaire was designed to explore the socio-economic determinants influencing the entrepreneurial success of women in low-income communities. The questionnaire comprised ten questions focused on key themes such as financial support, mentorship, community networks, cultural norms, and business sustainability indicators. Responses were collected from 144 women entrepreneurs, with participants

indicating their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). The aggregated responses provide valuable insights into participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the factors impacting their entrepreneurial activities. The first question assessed whether financial support was adequate for sustaining businesses. Responses showed a relatively balanced distribution, with 40% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing, while 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This reflects a divide in perceptions of financial adequacy, suggesting that while some women have sufficient access to financial resources, others face significant challenges. Similarly, the question regarding access to financial services yielded mixed results, with 41% expressing agreement or strong agreement, while 45% were neutral or disagreed. These findings highlight the persistent issue of financial inclusion, with many women entrepreneurs struggling to access the financial resources necessary for sustaining and scaling their businesses.

**Table-1**  
**The Likert Scale Survey**

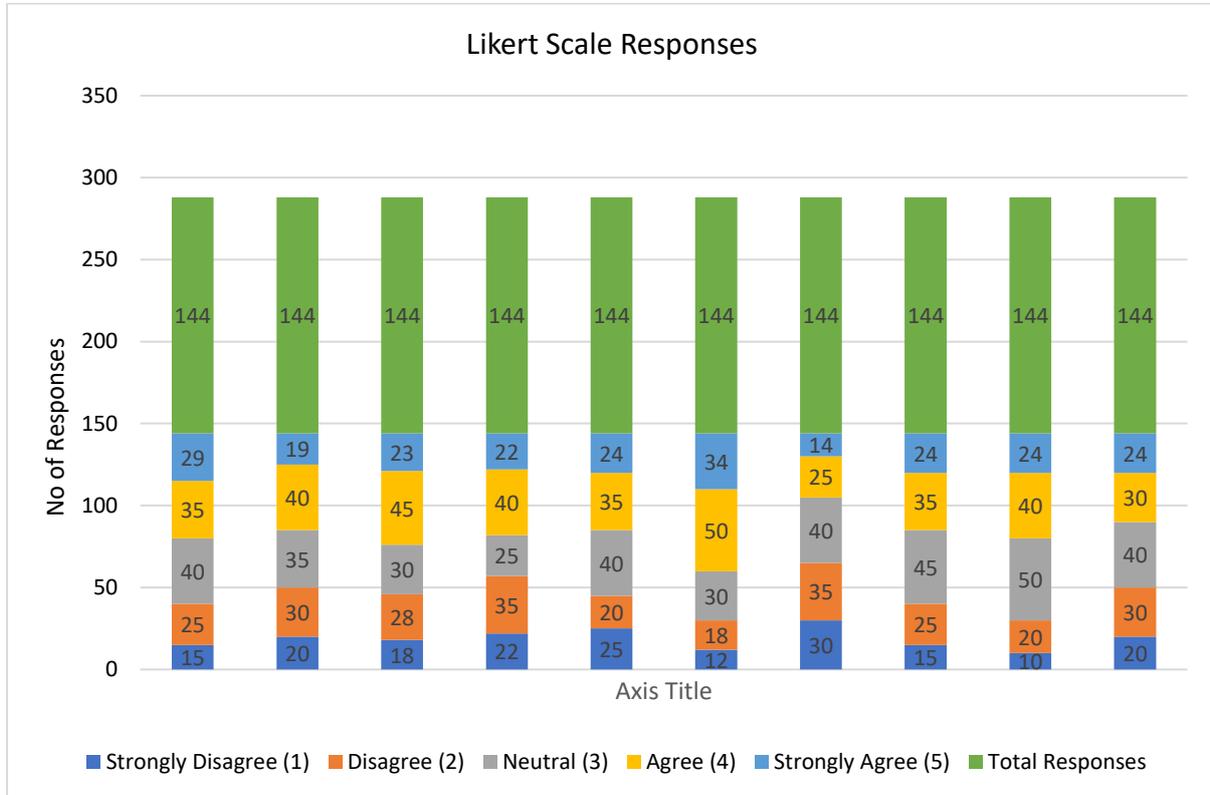
Question	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total Responses
Financial support has been adequate to sustain my business.	15	25	40	35	29	144
Mentorship programs have positively influenced my business decisions.	20	30	35	40	19	144
Community networks have provided valuable resources for my business.	18	28	30	45	23	144
I have experienced consistent growth in my business revenue over the past year.	22	35	25	40	22	144
Access to financial services is sufficient to support my business needs.	25	20	40	35	24	144
I feel empowered to make independent business decisions.	12	18	30	50	34	144
Cultural norms in my community support women entrepreneurs.	30	35	40	25	14	144
Family support has been instrumental in my entrepreneurial journey.	15	25	45	35	24	144



I have access to training programs that improve my entrepreneurial skills.	10	20	50	40	24	144
The local market provides adequate opportunities for my business to grow.	20	30	40	30	24	144

Questions on mentorship and community networks revealed their significant impact on entrepreneurial success. Forty-one percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that mentorship programs positively influenced their business decisions, while 35% remained neutral. Similarly, 47% agreed or strongly agreed that community networks provided valuable resources, suggesting that these networks play a critical role in supporting entrepreneurial activities. However, the neutral responses indicate a potential underutilization of these opportunities, possibly due to a lack of awareness or access. Questions on cultural norms and family support provided insights into socio-cultural dynamics. While only 39% of participants felt that cultural norms supported women entrepreneurs, a significant 45% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This highlights the persistent challenges posed by restrictive cultural norms, which often limit women’s mobility, decision-making autonomy, and market access. In contrast, family support emerged as a strong enabler, with 41% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that their families were instrumental in their entrepreneurial journey. These findings underscore the critical role of familial backing in mitigating the effects of socio-cultural barriers. Questions regarding access to training programs and market opportunities revealed contrasting trends. Fifty-four percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to training programs that improved their entrepreneurial skills, while only 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates that training programs are relatively accessible and perceived as beneficial by many women entrepreneurs. Conversely, perceptions of local market opportunities were more mixed, with 37% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 35% remaining neutral.

These responses suggest that while training programs are effective, market opportunities may be insufficient or inconsistent, limiting the scalability of women-led enterprises. The questionnaire responses highlight several key trends. Financial support and mentorship programs are recognized as critical enablers of entrepreneurial success, yet access remains uneven. Cultural norms continue to present substantial barriers, particularly in low-income settings where traditional roles constrain women’s economic participation. At the same time, the strong role of family support and the positive impact of training programs suggest potential pathways for empowering women entrepreneurs. From a policy perspective, these findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to improve financial inclusion, such as the development of gender-sensitive financial products and microfinance initiatives. Expanding mentorship programs and community-based support networks could further enhance women’s entrepreneurial capacities. Additionally, addressing restrictive cultural norms through community engagement and education initiatives is essential for enabling women to participate fully in economic activities. The responses also underscore the importance of fostering market opportunities to ensure that training programs translate into tangible business growth. In conclusion, the questionnaire provides a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic determinants influencing women entrepreneurs in low-income communities. The findings underscore the interconnectedness of these factors and the need for integrated approaches that address both structural and cultural barriers to entrepreneurial success. These insights can inform evidence-based policymaking and the design of interventions aimed at promoting inclusive economic growth.



**Fig-1 The responses of 144 candidates**

The figure 1 provides a visual representation of aggregated Likert scale responses from 144 women entrepreneurs, highlighting their perceptions of socio-economic determinants influencing their entrepreneurial success. The distribution of responses reveals notable trends, with Neutral responses being prevalent across most questions, suggesting ambivalence or variability in experiences. Positive perceptions were more prominent in areas such as mentorship programs and access to training, where a significant proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, indicating these interventions' beneficial impact. Conversely, questions related to financial support adequacy and cultural norms revealed higher levels of disagreement, underscoring persistent barriers in these domains that hinder entrepreneurial progress. Family support, however, emerged as a strong enabling factor, with many participants acknowledging its instrumental role in sustaining their entrepreneurial efforts. These findings highlight the interconnected challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in low-income communities, emphasizing the critical need for targeted interventions in financial inclusion, cultural transformation, and community-based support systems to foster resilience and promote equitable entrepreneurial growth. The correlation analysis table 4.2 highlights the strength and significance of relationships between key variables impacting women entrepreneurs in low-income communities. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) for the relationship between financial support and business sustainability is 0.58, with a p-value of 0.01, indicating a moderate positive relationship that is statistically significant. This result suggests that as financial support increases, the sustainability of women-led businesses is likely to improve. Financial support, such as access to credit and funding, plays a critical role in enabling entrepreneurs to invest in business growth, manage operational costs, and enhance profitability, thereby fostering long-term sustainability.

**Table -2**

**Corelation Analysis**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Financial Support and Business Sustainability	0.58	0.01
Mentorship and Business Decisions	0.65	0.02

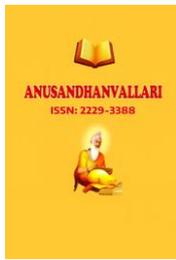
Similarly, the correlation coefficient for mentorship and business decisions is 0.65, with a p-value of 0.02, reflecting a strong positive and statistically significant relationship. This indicates that mentorship programs have a meaningful impact on the quality and effectiveness of business decisions made by women entrepreneurs. Mentorship provides critical guidance, knowledge, and resources that enhance decision-making, strategic planning, and the ability to navigate challenges, which are essential for entrepreneurial success. Both findings underscore the interconnected nature of socio-economic determinants influencing women entrepreneurs. Financial support addresses structural constraints by providing the resources necessary for growth, while mentorship addresses knowledge and capacity gaps by fostering skills and confidence. These results highlight the importance of integrated interventions that combine financial inclusion with robust mentorship programs to empower women entrepreneurs, thereby improving business sustainability and decision-making capacities. The significance of these relationships reinforces the need for targeted policies that address both structural and capacity-related barriers to entrepreneurial success. The regression summary is shown in table 3.

**Table -3**

**Regression Summary**

Predictor Variable	Dependent Variable	R-Squared	Significance (p-value)
Financial Support	Business Sustainability	0.34	0.01
Mentorship	Business Decisions	0.41	0.03

The regression summary table provides insights into the predictive relationships between financial support and business sustainability, as well as mentorship and business decisions among women entrepreneurs in low-income communities. The R-squared value for the relationship between financial support and business sustainability is 0.34, indicating that 34% of the variance in business sustainability is explained by financial support. With a p-value of 0.01, this result is statistically significant, underscoring the critical role financial support plays in ensuring the sustainability of women-led businesses. Financial support, such as access to credit and capital, enables entrepreneurs to invest in business operations, expand their activities, and mitigate risks, all of which are essential for long-term viability. Similarly, the R-squared value for mentorship and business decisions is 0.41, demonstrating that mentorship accounts for 41% of the variability in business decision-making

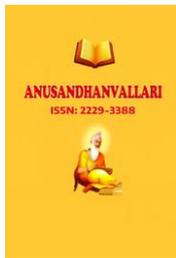


among women entrepreneurs. The p-value of 0.03 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship. This finding highlights the vital role of mentorship in enhancing entrepreneurial decision-making capabilities. Through mentorship, women entrepreneurs gain access to guidance, expertise, and strategic insights that empower them to make informed, effective decisions, navigate challenges, and seize opportunities in competitive markets. Both findings emphasize the importance of addressing both structural and capacity-related factors to improve entrepreneurial outcomes. Financial support lays the groundwork for operational and financial stability, while mentorship equips entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills required for effective decision-making. Together, these elements contribute to a holistic ecosystem that supports sustainable business practices and enhances the success of women entrepreneurs. These results reinforce the study's hypothesis that socio-economic determinants, including financial inclusion and mentorship, are key to fostering entrepreneurial success in low-income settings. They also provide evidence to guide policymakers in designing targeted interventions that address both financial and capacity-building needs. Financial support plays a fundamental role in enhancing the sustainability of women-led businesses, particularly in low-income communities where access to resources is often constrained. The availability of financial support, such as access to credit, loans, and investment capital, enables entrepreneurs to address critical operational needs. It provides the resources necessary for inventory procurement, infrastructure improvements, workforce expansion, and technological adoption—all of which contribute to a business's ability to remain competitive and adapt to changing market conditions.

Moreover, financial support serves as a buffer against economic uncertainties and external shocks, such as market volatility or unexpected expenses. Entrepreneurs with access to financial resources are better equipped to manage cash flow challenges, mitigate risks, and maintain operational stability during downturns. This stability is a cornerstone of business sustainability, as it allows businesses to navigate periods of financial strain without compromising long-term viability. Additionally, financial support facilitates investments in growth opportunities. Entrepreneurs can leverage financial resources to explore new markets, diversify product offerings, and implement innovative strategies. These growth-oriented activities not only strengthen business sustainability but also position enterprises for future expansion and profitability. The ability to scale operations contributes to the long-term resilience and competitiveness of women-led businesses. In the context of women entrepreneurs in low-income settings, financial support also empowers them to overcome systemic barriers, such as gender-based discrimination in traditional lending systems. Tailored financial products, such as microfinance initiatives, provide women with equitable access to capital, enabling them to build sustainable businesses that contribute to their economic independence and community development. In summary, financial support directly impacts business sustainability by ensuring operational stability, fostering resilience, and enabling growth-oriented strategies. For women entrepreneurs, such support is particularly transformative, as it helps overcome systemic barriers and establishes a foundation for long-term success.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the socio-economic factors influencing the entrepreneurial sustainability of women in low-income communities, specifically highlighting the critical roles of financial support, mentorship, and community networks. The results reveal that financial accessibility is a strong predictor of business sustainability, aligning with existing literature that underscores the importance of resource availability for business growth and resilience. Access to financial resources allows women entrepreneurs to manage operational costs, invest in growth strategies, and mitigate risks, which are essential for maintaining long-term business viability. These findings are consistent with previous studies that identify financial inclusion as a cornerstone of entrepreneurial success, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Mozumdar et al., 2020). However, the persistence of systemic barriers, such as limited access to credit and

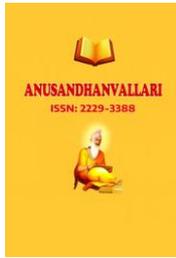


gender-biased lending practices, emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to address these structural inequities.

Mentorship emerged as another significant determinant, strongly correlating with improved decision-making among women entrepreneurs. This aligns with prior research that highlights mentorship as a vital capacity-building mechanism, enabling entrepreneurs to access guidance, strategic insights, and knowledge-sharing opportunities (Cho, Robalino, & Watson, 2020). The study's findings suggest that mentorship not only equips women with the skills necessary for effective business management but also fosters confidence and adaptability in navigating market challenges. Similarly, community networks were found to provide substantial support by facilitating access to resources, information, and collaborative opportunities, reinforcing their importance as a social infrastructure for entrepreneurial success. This interconnected role of financial, mentorship, and community systems highlights the necessity of integrated support mechanisms that address both structural and capacity-related barriers.

The implications of these findings are profound, particularly for policymakers and practitioners. To foster entrepreneurial sustainability among women in low-income communities, integrated strategies must be adopted to address the multifaceted challenges they face. Financial inclusion policies should prioritize the design and implementation of gender-sensitive financial products, such as microfinance initiatives and flexible credit schemes, that cater specifically to the unique needs of women entrepreneurs. Additionally, expanding mentorship programs to include diverse industries and community-driven networks can provide women with the necessary tools to enhance their decision-making capacities and business performance. Community engagement programs aimed at addressing restrictive cultural norms are also critical for creating an enabling environment where women entrepreneurs can thrive. Such programs should focus on promoting gender equality, reducing stigma, and fostering inclusive societal attitudes toward women's economic participation.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, as participants may overestimate or underestimate their experiences and perceptions. Additionally, the sample size, while sufficient for identifying trends, limits the generalizability of the findings to other low-income communities with different socio-economic or cultural contexts. Future research should address these limitations through larger, more diverse samples and the use of mixed-method approaches to triangulate findings. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the long-term impact of financial, mentorship, and community-driven interventions on entrepreneurial sustainability. Specific areas for exploration include the role of digital financial services in enhancing access to credit and the potential of technology-enabled mentorship platforms in scaling support systems for women entrepreneurs. In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of socio-economic support systems in fostering the sustainability of women-led businesses in low-income communities. Financial inclusion, mentorship, and community networks are all critical components of an integrated approach to addressing the systemic barriers that women entrepreneurs face. The findings emphasize the need for targeted policies that bridge these gaps, enabling women to overcome structural inequities and achieve long-term business success. Holistic support systems that integrate financial, educational, and community-driven initiatives are essential for empowering women entrepreneurs and enhancing their contributions to socio-economic development. Policymakers must prioritize these interventions to create a supportive ecosystem that not only addresses immediate challenges but also builds resilience and adaptability among women entrepreneurs in the face of evolving economic landscapes.



---

## References

- [1] Brush, C. G., De Bruin, A., & Welter, F. (2019). A gender-aware framework for women's entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 11(1), 2–20. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-06-2018-0059>
- [2] Beriso, M. (2021). Socio-cultural barriers to women's entrepreneurship in Ethiopia. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 28(3), 345–362. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-02-2020-0034>
- [3] Cho, Y., Robalino, D., & Watson, S. (2020). Supporting self-employment and small-scale entrepreneurship: Potential programs to improve livelihoods for vulnerable workers. *World Bank Research Observer*, 35(2), 145–173. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkaa001>
- [4] GEM. (2021). Global entrepreneurship monitor: 2021/2022 global report. <https://www.gemconsortium.org>
- [5] Kelley, D. J., Baumer, B. S., & Caughlin, S. (2020). Women's entrepreneurship in the face of gender-specific challenges. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 44(4), 622–650. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258719834775>
- [6] Mozumdar, L., Khan, H. T. A., & Rahman, M. M. (2020). Women's empowerment and entrepreneurship in Bangladesh: An empirical analysis. *Journal of International Development*, 32(7), 1101–1119. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3485>
- [7] OECD. (2020). Enhancing women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and business leadership. <https://www.oecd.org>
- [8] Orobia, L. A., Byabashaija, W., Munene, J. C., Sejjaaka, S. K., & Musinguzi, D. (2020). How do small business owners manage working capital in an emerging economy? A qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 17(2), 217–240. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRAM-04-2019-0045>
- [9] Rafiki, A., & Nasution, R. (2019). Women entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia: A study of the experiences and challenges. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 11(1), 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-02-2018-0014>
- [10] UN Women. (2021). Beyond COVID-19: A feminist plan for sustainability and social justice. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. <https://www.unwomen.org>
- [11] World Bank. (2022). Women entrepreneurs in developing economies: Drivers of economic transformation. <https://www.worldbank.org>
- [12] Yadav, V., & Unni, J. (2016). Women entrepreneurship: Research review and future directions. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 6(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-016-0047-x>