

# MODELING THE IMPACT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND MENTORING ON SOUTH ASIAN FEMALE ENTREPRENEURIAL PERFORMANCE

Isha Kampoowale  
Javaria Khalid <sup>1</sup>

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Review



## ABSTRACT

*Female entrepreneurs contribute significantly to Asia's economic progress. Despite their economic success, we know very little about them. This conceptual paper provides a comprehensive review of female entrepreneurs in South Asian countries, specifically Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, focusing on how they differ from their counterparts in the West along four dimensions: female entrepreneurs' unique characteristics, distinct intentions, resource constraints, and management styles. This conceptual paper found significant variations between Asian and Western female entrepreneurs and significant heterogeneity within South Asia. Female entrepreneurs in South Asian countries frequently have a low level of education and operate in the informal sector due to economic need, but many female entrepreneurs in transitioning/developed Asian countries are well educated and work in high-growth industries. Gender inequality, as well as unequal opportunities for women in the workplace, are important impediments to the education and funding of female entrepreneurs in South Asia. Family relations play an important role in the women empowerment approach of Asian female entrepreneurs. The evaluation and analysis have significant implications for future research and entrepreneurial activity.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship may create jobs in a country, and female entrepreneurs are vital to this (Nawaz, 2018). Ward (2009) defines entrepreneurship as the skill and initiative to start, create, and manage a business despite obstacles to profitability. Entrepreneurship is the strategic planning, launch, and management of a new business that offers a unique product or service (Karlan & Valdivia, 2011). According to Jayawarna et al. (2013) an entrepreneur is someone who can organise and manage an organisation, particularly a business, with innovation and risk-taking in contrast to being employed

by others. The International Labour Organisation (Van Daele, 2008) has noted a downside of entrepreneurial culture as the lack of acknowledgment for women entrepreneurs. The majority of entrepreneurs are men, whereas women are under-represented. Recognition of women's entrepreneurship skills are still needed. Poverty disproportionately affects women in several emerging nations, and gender disparity impairs economic growth and national development (Elson, 2009). Many stakeholders, including government officials, development community members, and civil society representatives, recognise that women's active participation in small companies is necessary for

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author: Javaria Khalid  
Email: [khalid-20@graduate.utm.my](mailto:khalid-20@graduate.utm.my)

comprehensive development, sustained economic prosperity, and job creation. Supporting women in income generating and asset accumulation has boosted economic growth and employment creation. Ahl and Marlow (2012) also claim that women are more environmentally conscientious, resource efficient, more likely to reuse materials, and more likely to make long-term family and business decisions.

Women in developing nations face multiple socio-cultural practices and racial dynamics, including diverse spiritual traditions, complex legal systems, and complex economic and political issues. Women are less involved in the labour force and less influential in education, nutrition, health, and politics in most developing nations. Crites et al. 2015 found that people focused behaviour makes teammates and subordinates happier and more satisfied. The cultural environment greatly affects women's leadership in different economies. These cultural biases can prevent women from attaining their full potential and developing their career and leadership skills (Manzoor, 2015).

Past research has examined gender differences, especially in developing nations (Kimbu et al., 2021; Santos & Neumeyer, 2021). This study examines how women in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan struggle to earn and protect their worker rights. It examines women's struggles to balance reproductive labour with a paid jobs, achieve legal equality, balance mobility and public visibility with familial duties, societal expectations, and body norms. Women's economic empowerment and visibility affect gender norms and patriarchal structures that govern women's lives and activities beyond employment and market dynamics. These systems continue to require women to do reproductive labour and present several interwoven impediments that prevent collective mobilisation around common challenges (Folbre 1994; Kabeer 2016). Despite its imagined potential to empower, equality often becomes a battleground for women's authority.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Women entrepreneurs start, run, and manage businesses. Thus, a female entrepreneur's business expansion is important in entrepreneurship. Scholars and experts have noticed the rise of women entrepreneurs in emerging nations. Donors, international public institutions, governmental agencies, NGOs, private firms, charities, research institutes, and businesses have created programmes or policies to support female entrepreneurs. The organisation promotes entrepreneurial skill development, women's network growth, access to capital and training, and high-quality start-up and business growth through policy. They agree that promoting women's entrepreneurship boosts economic growth. According to Vossenber (2023), women are less entrepreneurial than men worldwide. Despite its relevance, women-owned enterprise expansion research has been scarce until recently. Brush and Cooper (2012)

claim that the social awareness needed to conceptualise and develop explanatory frameworks for women-owned enterprises' growth trajectory was lacking. The research focused on women's entrepreneurship motivations. The study also examined how these motivations affected firm growth. The study also examined how size and sector affect these companies' growth (Rietz & Henrekson, 2000).

This study investigates gender inequality in South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and the unique traits of female entrepreneurs in this region. Additionally, previous research has shown that societal norms and gender-based expectations strongly impact female entrepreneurial identities and achievements (Franzke & Froese, 2019). Umar et al. (2022) cited women's empowerment as a major issue that society has ignored. This study studies the features of female entrepreneurs and how employment equality and women empowerment affect them.

## **3. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE**

### **3.1 Challenges of women entrepreneurs**

Amine and Staub (2009) found that South Asian women entrepreneurs face socio-cultural, economic, legal, political, and technical challenges. Additionally, unfavourable local regulatory, normative, and cognitive systems present additional problems for these individuals. Partners face financial constraints, restricted raw material availability, bad management, inadequate market knowledge, and poor coordination when developing entrepreneurship among members, according to Akanmu et al. (2018). It is commonly known that people often emulate the academic or professional paths of their colleagues, friends, family, and acquaintances. People react quickly to terminology like entrepreneurs, biologists, administrators, etc (Yustian et al., 2021). People choose careers like fashion depending on their talents. Piva and Rovelli (2022) also illustrate that society, religion, cultural influence, and gender inequality exist in all countries. Women face more hurdles in exerting job autonomy, especially in male-dominated communities (Turnbull et al., 2020). Business education is popular in both the public and private education sectors. Hussain et al. (2021) found that 22% of women are working and 1% are entrepreneurs (Hussain et al., 2021).

Female entrepreneurs can boost economies of Taiwan, Japan, Pakistan, India, South Korea, Hong Kong, and China (Nakakaawa & Hazarika 2024). The worldwide population, encompassing over 51.5%, can impact the regional economic revolution. Women can make significant contributions by starting businesses in the post-Corona era (Ahmed et al., 2020). The COVID-19 epidemic has caused a global economic collapse and increased poverty. The percentage of people earning less than \$1.90 per day in severe poverty has increased. This percentage is expected to rise from 0.7 to 9 percent. To

effectively manage the rapid acceleration induced by the COVID-19 epidemic, women must be actively involved in revenue-generating activities (Ochnik, 2020). South Asia is the world's most densely populated region economically (Hussain et al., 2021; Tisdell et al., 2020; Caseiro & Coelho, 2018).

Entrepreneurship is well-established and gaining academic significance. Many academics have advanced the field. Their research focuses on industrialised nations with various economic, political, legal, and cultural situations (Burbar & Shkukani, 2021). Erogul and Na (2021) and Hamid (2020) found that in developing nations, women entrepreneurs have focused on cities. Rural women's entrepreneurship has been neglected in research. This oversight has left a gap in the literature. Therefore, these studies cannot be generalised (Shaheen et al., 2019). This study examines urban and rural women's entrepreneurship. Positively, more than 50% of women engage in higher education, with a focus on market-oriented fields, including MBBS, Engineering, and Business Administration (Shaheen et al., 2019). Thus, this research should be applicable and generalizable to all regional growing economies.

According to Hafiz et al. (2020) women can only do housework and raise children. Thus, rising countries' economies are unstable, and their ambitions to become economically powerful stay unmet for a long time (Hussain et al., 2021). The COVID-19 epidemic has devastated economies globally, including strong ones (Ahmed et al., 2020). After the COVID-19 pandemic, women entrepreneurs are likely to boost some households' economic resilience. This study examines the barriers that have prevented business graduates from starting small businesses (SMEs). Despite having a Business Administration degree and remarkable talents, many female business graduates choose to work in the service industry or become inactive after marriage, showing fear regarding pragmatic entrepreneurship (Hamid, 2020; Stephens, 2020). The success of women entrepreneurs is determined by four important factors: financial, cultural, marketing, and technical (Kumar & Shukla, 2019).

Since financial institutions view women entrepreneurs in developing nations as higher-risk borrowers than men, scholars have studied their financial challenges. Women in developing nations confront significant problems due to their diverse cultural and environmental circumstances (Malinao, 2021). Thus, this study focuses on South Asian women entrepreneurs. Marketing challenges are difficult for female business graduates since men dominate the market (Turnbull et al., 2020; Stephens, 2020). Women entrepreneurs in developing nations lag behind their counterparts, preventing them from fully capitalising on new technology (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2021).

Many studies have examined women's entrepreneurship in emerging nations, including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and others. Academic researchers have studied entrepreneurship, notably women's participation. In studies by Tisdell et al. (2020), these dimensions include entrepreneurial traits and skills, the challenges

women entrepreneurs face, the impact of microfinance on women entrepreneurs, and the growth of women entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Aneke & Garba, 2024). This study examines how employment equality and women empowerment affect South Asian women's entrepreneurial goals in rural and urban locations and also includes India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

#### **4. EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY**

The economic effects of gender inequality have garnered attention in economics. Cuberes and Teignier (2014) have studied how gender equality affects economic development. Since civil rights laws were passed in the 1960s, equal employment opportunity has protected women from workplace discrimination. Despite 50 years of civil rights progress, male dominance persists in the workplace.

Industrialized nations support gender parity as a human right and a foundation for world peace, prosperity, and sustainable development (United Nations, 2021). Gender inequality exists in many nations (Odaga, 2020; Ramos et al., 2020). Gender equality or equitable labour division affects economic activity, particularly efficiency and production (Bertay et al., 2020; Kennedy et al., 2017). South Asian women are underrepresented in the workforce. According to statistics, women comprise less than 40% of higher education institutes in India (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). According to Nuseir et al. (2021), many Indian workplaces practice gender-based discrimination. Despite advances in women's higher education, educational disparities exist (Koo et al., 2022). In rural places, women and men receive unequal pay (Choudhuri et al., 2021). Gender inequality causes "talent loss" as well as power imbalances (Clavero & Galligan, 2020). In India, Chanana (2012) discovered that female students are more engaged in education than male students. But studies show that women are underrepresented in the workforce. This is due to sociocultural factors.

Bangladesh, in the south, too struggles with underrepresentation of women in school. A university survey found that women comprise less than 5% of the population (Morely & Crossouard, 2015). Similarly, women make up 49.2% of Pakistanis. Professional work options are available to 52% of people (Catalyst, 2014; Hurst et al., 2016). Pakistan has the best gender parity in South Asia, with a 55% gender gap. Women have made some progress in cities, but rural municipalities and townships still lag behind. The rural population of Pakistan, which makes up 70% of the country's total population, has many issues.

##### **4.1 Equal Pay**

Schultz (2002) found that female educational performance boosts the economy. Women are becoming prominent in male-dominated fields, undermining the

idea of a male monopoly. Additionally, empirical evidence reveals a constant upward trend of women in leadership roles worldwide (Hamdan & Saraih, 2021). Seguino (2000) suggests gender pay gaps may boost exports and economic growth. Despite extensive empirical studies (Bertay et al., 2020), the economic effects of gender inequality/equality are unclear. This is especially true for industrial success (Minasyan et al., 2019). A legal, cultural, and social framework in which women's and men's rights are influenced by sex and/or sexual identity results in uneven access to privileges and reinforce gender-based cultural and social roles.

In South Asian countries, professional women are considered less competent and skilled than men. This notion is due to women in power and advancement receiving less attention and opportunities (Saifuddin & Dyke, 2019). Organizations prefer to hire women with children because they assume household tasks will hamper their professional performance. According to Saifuddin and Dyke (2019), women's humour and skills are inconsistent, leading to the assumption that they are less capable than men. The nation's male-centric cultural standards affect everyone. The belief that men are more capable than women prevents women from achieving higher management roles in academic institutions (Alghofaily, 2019). Women's lack of career development options affects their lifestyle, causing personal and professional impediments that hinder their career advancement. For instance, long-term employees don't earn more. Due to increased living costs, they cannot improve their daily life or meet rising living expenses. These individuals experience negative consequences, which make them vulnerable and hinder their advancement.

#### **4.2 Equal Career Advancement**

Equal career development means giving people equal chances to advance in their careers. It stresses the necessity to ensure that everyone, regardless of Career advancement, is essential in all fields. European nations are said to offer more equitable professional advancement opportunities worldwide. However, women remain underrepresented in the workforce. Several countries, including New Zealand, Australia, Africa, Canada, and South Asia, have underrepresented women (Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017). The National Centre for Education found that 50% of PhD degrees are awarded in the US, although women are underrepresented in this group. Farooq et al. (2020) found that UK university female students outnumber male students. However, women remain underrepresented in professional jobs compared to men. In South Asian countries, women are underrepresented in professional roles. According to statistics, women make up less than 40% of higher education institutes in India. Chanana (2012) notes that while female higher education participation in India exceeds male student engagement, women are underrepresented in management. This is due to socio-cultural variables, including gender inequality

(Shah et al., 2020). Male applicants are more likely to be considered for jobs in Pakistani society because they have larger social networks than women. Due to societal constraints, women avoid socialising with men. In many organisations, women are disproportionately denied professional training, formal meetings, local or worldwide workshops, scholarships, research activities, and conference participation.

### **5. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

According to Saraswathy and her colleagues, women's empowerment and equality require recognizing and realizing their innate strengths, providing opportunities for personal development, and acknowledging their role in creating their own futures. In addition to cultural and economic effects, all conceptualizations of female empowerment include cognitive elements. This covers both personal power (self-confidence, motivation, and self-fulfilment) and external power in society (Puhazhendi & Badatya, 2002). According to Stine and Karina, "empowerment" is a developmental stage when marginalised individuals and families have the ability to influence their circumstances and make conscious decisions. The experts also stressed that economic empowerment largely involves women's income. The poll found that household structure, marriage benefits, economic autonomy, mobility flexibility, and modern professional participation are the main indicators of women's empowerment. Angeles et al. (2021) claim that gender discrepancy in salaries, education, labour force participation, and income distribution among income categories might hinder or help gender equality. Women's engagement in social, political, and economic realms in India is unequal (Angeles et al., 2021). Before assessing patriarchal countries' gender empowerment, women's empowerment must be prioritised (Singh et al., 2019). Conceptual Framework is presented at Figure 1.

#### **5.1 Psychological**

Wang and Lee (2021) suggest that job roles and attitudes and beliefs that promote personal goal achievement promote psychological empowerment. A woman's lack of self-awareness of her intents, ambitions, values, and beliefs may increase her own obstacles to success, adding to the glass ceiling effect. Many psychological issues prevent women from advancing in organisations. Women's personalities are shaped by their social background and personal experiences in a constrictive society, which affects their behaviour and skill development. Tlaiss (2014) states that low self-confidence, fear about responsibility, and difficulty balancing family and work might make leadership difficult. However, a poll by Albakry (2016) found that people may be gloomy about their guidance skills. This study found a strong link between leadership training and women's leadership ability. The fear of professional commitments is largely caused by women's lack of self-

confidence. Social pressure and traditional culture limit women's development of proper values and attitudes (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Role conflict is another issue relating to women's personal traits, particularly in psychology. This problem develops when women try to balance work and life. The lack of organisational infrastructure makes it difficult for women to balance their family and career obligations (Kattan et al., 2016). Kattan et al. (2016) also noted the subjective feeling of difficulty and dissatisfaction due to many obligations and marginalisation. Women sometimes think of themselves as inferior since they were raised in a society that favours male dominance and feminine submissiveness (Alotaibi et al., 2017).

Cultural norms and traditions affect women's psychological empowerment, which is vital to understanding intrinsic drive. According to Al Ghamdi (2016), psychological motivation includes competence, self-determination, and influence (Kusumawardani et al., 2024). Meaning in self-empowerment is the amount to which an individual cares about or believes in a given outcome (Rawat, 2011). Thus, South Asian women may interpret it as their confidence and desire to lead. Psychological empowerment improves performance and goal achievement, according to Rawat (2011). Empowerment emphasises personal ideals and goals.

## **5.2 Social**

Girls and women suffer greatly throughout their lives due to social subordination. Gender inequality can shape a woman's life. Note that gender disparity affects men too. However, gender inequality is a major social issue, especially in developing nations like Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Entrenched attitudes in society reinforce gender inequality and female subjugation. Men and women live in unequal conditions due to their cultural views. Pakistani women's roles are highly affected by culture and society. These functions revolve around development and reproduction, giving women a dual role. In many developing nations, women are side-lined from family decision-making and focus on domestic tasks like housework.

Men and women have different social statuses in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Kaul (2018) says bigotry and prejudice are common. Boys' commitment to sexist views, which promote male power and superiority over women, and gender stereotypes marginalise women in educational, occupational, and entrepreneurial fields (Delavande & Zafar, 2013; Imam et al., 2014). According to Samo et al. (2019), women often receive negative feedback from family, friends, and the community when considering launching a business.

Women in South Asian countries face unequal opportunities in the labour market, economy, and society. They are seen as incompetent. People are affected by gender stereotypes throughout their lives (Marlow & Patton, 2017; Gupta et al., 2013; Orser et al., 2006). When people want to be entrepreneurs or are forced to due to financial restrictions, their parents, siblings, and

other family members sometimes oppose them. Women face gender preconceptions and discouragement from family, friends, and the community before starting their own businesses. Unfortunately, their employees still have such preconceptions about them as entrepreneurs. Sexism persists because society believes men are stronger and superior. Male subordinates doubt female leaders' talents, knowledge, and competence. Women in leadership roles are questioned for their decision-making abilities and their potential negative impact on organisational performance (Dean & Ford, 2017; Muhammad, Warren, & Binte-Saleem, 2017; Roomi & Parrott, 2008). According to Samo et al. (2019), women in leadership positions are dissatisfied when men don't follow orders.

## **5.3 Economic**

Another major impediment for female entrepreneurs is the economy (Giardino et al., 2015; Marlow & Patton, 2005; Salamzadeh & Kawamorita-Kesim, 2015). Financial access is difficult for women from the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) socioeconomic group (Brush et al., 2018; Realini & Mehta, 2015). Their low savings hinder them. Lower socioeconomic strata typically have financial restraints, making borrowing from friends and family problematic. This is because many in these classes live to pay check to pay check and struggle to meet basic demands. Lack of savings and investment, as well as an understanding of financial resources and markets, including venture capitalists, micro-finance, small and medium enterprise (SME) finance, and government programs to promote their endeavours, worsen their issues (Brush et al., 2018).

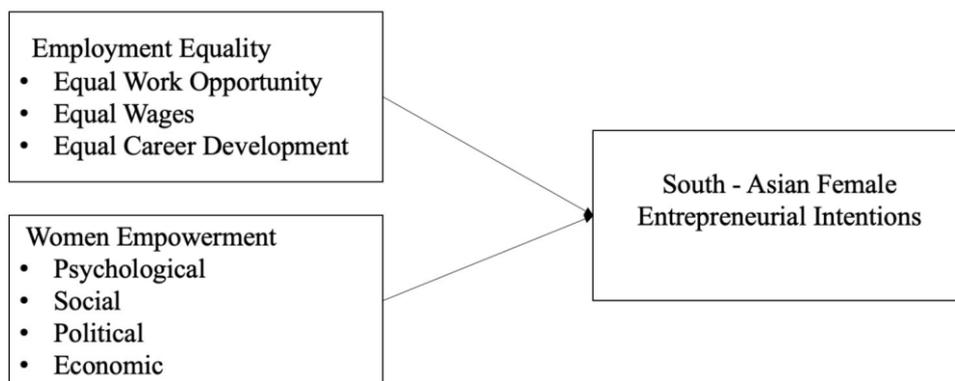
In developing nations like Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, women entrepreneurs face financial hurdles and volatility in the early phases of their companies, mostly linked to financing and fundraising. As their ventures grow, they face a major cash flow or working capital management concern. Cash and credit sales transactions require funds for salaries, commodities, and other financial commitments. People need more money to recover from financial losses. Entrepreneurs must get sufficient funding to sustain their businesses (Hisrich, 2013; Mayoux, 1999; Orser et al., 2006; Ramadani et al., 2015; Ribes-Giner et al., 2018). Abdullah and Quayes (2016) suggest that increasing women's access to financial resources and streamlining the borrowing process can boost economic growth and improve bank attitudes.

## **5.4 Political**

The collective contributions to this edition on South Asian women's empowerment are more politically focused. This discourse contextualises power dynamics within class, caste, and location, as well as gender norms and relationships that affect women's decisions. The present investigations study power redistribution patterns across scales and, in some cases, time. An intervention

redefines power as a political entity rather than an individual economic force to empower women. State political power shapes women's policies. The women's movement and its allies must redefine talks about women's rights and gender equality and seize political opportunities to gain power. Power is flexible and ever-changing. As activists have pushed for women's rights and access to resources, opposing forces have hampered women's capacity to establish unions, freely move in public spaces, work in male-dominated sectors, and challenge patriarchal norms of subordination. Women's empowerment is incomplete without understanding the reaction and the cyclical pattern of conflict that drives development and regression in the women's movement (Basu, 1995; Loomba & Lukose, 2012; Roy, 2012).

The "woman question" has long shaped nationalism and nation-building in the region (Chatterjee, 1993; Azime et al., 2009). Active women's movements in South Asia have promoted women's empowerment (Azim et al., 2009; Nazneen & Sultan, 2014). Since the 1995 Beijing Declaration, which sought to empower women worldwide UN Women (1995), the region has led the way in implementing policies, programs, and interventions. The welfare, material conditions, and rights of women in industrialised nations have improved due to these policies, interventions, programmatic work, and social mobilisation.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

**6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

A comprehensive assessment of the literature on Asian female entrepreneurs revealed an increasing number of scholarly studies in this area. This study examines South-Asian gender discrepancies and female entrepreneurs' unique traits, emphasising the importance of considering Asian female entrepreneurs' different entrepreneurial traits. Our investigation shows that Eastern cultural norms and societal standards shape Asian female entrepreneurs' experiences. Thus, more research is needed to determine how these traits affect female entrepreneurs' managerial style, strategic decision-making, and company development strategy. Additionally, Eastern cultural norms are crucial to understanding female entrepreneurs' actions and decisions. Strong cultural factors that hinder women's ability to make deliberate decisions and engage in behaviours that enhance their own welfare and enable them to actively contribute to determining their own destinies are predicted to affect the female agency. Female agency is influenced by "time poverty," which refers to the restricted time women have to pursue their own goals. This is often caused by an excessive household workload, especially in nations where men do little or no unpaid domestic work (Ruyter et al., 2012; Padgett & Warnecke, 2011). These characteristics' effects on women's leadership styles and management techniques in entrepreneurship may add a new perspective to studies on entrepreneurial leadership,

decision-making, and leader-employee dynamics in early enterprises. The Theory of Gendered Organisations investigates how gender affects women's professional experiences (Acker, 1990, 2006; Britton, 2000; Connell, 2006; Mastracci & Arreola, 2016). Acker (1992, p. 250) defines gender in organisations as the systematic and socially manufactured distinction between genders, femininity and masculinity. This distinction occurs continuously in workplaces and other social settings. Acker's research states that gender is strongly ingrained in the workplace, resulting in unequal opportunities and experiences for men and women (Britton, 2000). Acker (1990) states that both formal and informal procedures and practices must be examined to understand gender in organisations. Gender analysis can be used to examine organisations. This strategy examines how gendered organisational structures perpetuate male advantages in employment, responsibilities, and prospects. Acker (2006) defines gendered organizations as those that favour masculinity and limit career, economic, and social opportunities for men. Organizations practice "performing gender" when gender determines task allocation, interpersonal relationships, and on-the-job interactions (Hearn and Morgan, 1990). This also occurs when males dominate organisational resources and make all choices (Acker, 2006). Four main processes integrate gender substructures into organisations, according to Acker (1990). The gendered organizational architecture establishes gender-specific responsibilities and

hierarchies. Production of symbols, ideas, and values also embeds gender substructures. This process is also influenced by gender interactions. Finally, gendered expectations for the ideal worker strengthen gender substructures in organisations (Acker, 1990).

Organizational behaviour research illuminates several ways organisations maintain economic inequity. These include hiring, role assignment, promotion, compensation, and organisational structure. However, further research is needed to fully comprehend each of these areas (Amis et al., 2019). In the public sector, scholarly studies have mostly examined recruiting, remuneration, and promotion, but not job allocation and structure, which includes norms and routines. Micro-level analysis of how gender affects women's employment experiences in male-dominated fields is scarce. Gendered organisations have been used to understand how gender interacts with organisational systems, recognising gender as an essential part of work and work processes (Acker, 2006). In their research, Mastracci and Arreola (2016) proposed that human resource management practices perpetuate gender norms, giving men benefits.

This article examines how gender affects women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. The researchers found that organisational and professional norms, routines, practices, and interactions contribute to women's empowerment. This study highlights the "loosely connected practices, processes, acts, and meanings" that make male-dominated roles inaccessible to women, as addressed by Acker (2006, p. 443). According to Ward and Rivera (2014) organisations often hide unjust gendered practices that are hard to identify and address. These practices disadvantage or exclude women, regardless of motives or persons, especially in South Asian cultures.

## 7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Female entrepreneurship in Asia, with its obstacles and potential, offers a unique opportunity to learn about a talented group that perseveres despite cultural norms. Examining South-Asian female entrepreneurs' experiences and the dynamic interplay between cultural values and environmental factors may help policymakers improve assistance programmes for female entrepreneurs. These findings may also influence Western female entrepreneur policy and support systems. Gaining insights into Asian female entrepreneurs' unique traits, such as their independence and dedication, would improve training and support. Coaching or mentoring can help women with low self-confidence, especially those starting new businesses.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This study of female entrepreneurship in the South Asian region highlights its distinctive characteristics and investigates the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship

in the South Asian region, focusing on two key variables: employment equality and women's empowerment, along with their respective dimensions. This study highlights the significance of intra-regional variation and notable disparities in female entrepreneurship between Asian and Western contexts.

Asian women business owners exhibit similar characteristics to entrepreneurs globally, including independence and a sense of pride in their achievements. However, their behaviour and attitudes are also shaped by their specific country and cultural context (Deng et al., 2011; Xheneti et al., 2019). According to Shi (2005), individuals exhibit a strong work ethic, actively pursue organisational objectives, and exercise caution when making decisions. Most female entrepreneurs are motivated by necessity, as they pursue entrepreneurship to enhance their family's income (Minniti & Arenius, 2003; Pines et al., 2012; Tambunan, 2009). Nevertheless, in China, there has been an increase in the number of women engaging in entrepreneurship driven by opportunity, which can be attributed to their increasing levels of education (Deng et al., 2011). The presence of religious and cultural factors contributes to gender inequality and restricts resource availability, thereby impeding the progress of Asian women in entrepreneurship (Datta & Gailey, 2012; Hernandez et al., 2012; Tambunan, 2017; Wu et al., 2021). The aforementioned phenomenon also has implications for female entrepreneurs' management and leadership style. It results in a leadership approach influenced by cultural factors, characterised by a participative and balanced approach that places importance on familial values (Chen et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020).

This conceptual study highlights the necessity for further research on South-Asian female entrepreneurship to enhance the existing body of knowledge and theoretical frameworks. This study aims to investigate the factors that facilitate opportunity-driven entrepreneurship in the Asian context and the strategies employed for identifying opportunities within an environment that restricts women's access to opportunities and presents them with limited choices. Considering the significant impact of religion on cultural norms that hinder women's participation in entrepreneurship (Shahriar, 2018; Tambunan, 2017), it would be appropriate to explore the relationship between religious beliefs and female entrepreneurship in the South-Asian context in future research. Moreover, the influence of Eastern cultural norms on the management methods employed by female entrepreneurs has the potential to expand the scope of research in entrepreneurial leadership. According to Reid et al. (2018), conducting research on the leadership styles of South Asian women has the potential to enhance the dynamics between leaders and employees in new ventures. The examination of family embeddedness and family systems in female entrepreneurship can enhance our understanding, considering the significant role that familial and social networks play in South Asia (Chen et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020). This study addressed

significant issues and has the potential to stimulate further research and practical applications.

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**Isha Kampoowale**

Azman Hashim Business  
International School, Universiti  
Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur,  
Malaysia.

[kampoowale@graduate.utm.my](mailto:kampoowale@graduate.utm.my)

ORCID 0000-0003-3304-4213

**Javaria Khalid**

Perdana Centre of Science,  
Technology & Innovation Policy,  
Razak Faculty of Technology and  
Informatics, Universiti Teknologi  
Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

[khalid-20@graduate.utm.my](mailto:khalid-20@graduate.utm.my)

ORCID 0009-0005-0013-9381

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