

Small Scale Industry and Women Empowerment: A Study with Special Reference to Davangere District, Karnataka, India

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Abstract

Women empowerment is a crucial aspect of socio-economic development, particularly in developing nations like India. Small Scale Industries (SSIs) have played a vital role in promoting financial independence, skill development, and social upliftment among women. This study examines the impact of SSIs on women empowerment in Davangere District, Karnataka. The research explores the participation of women in SSIs, the challenges they face, and the overall contribution of these industries to their economic and social well-being. The findings suggest that SSIs have significantly improved women's financial status, decision-making power, and self-reliance, though challenges such as lack of financial support, market access, and gender discrimination persist.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Small Scale Industry, Financial Independence, Skill Development

1. Introduction

Women empowerment is a multidimensional concept that includes economic, social, and political aspects. Small Scale Industries (SSIs) have emerged as a critical driver in empowering women by providing employment, income generation, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Karnataka, particularly Davangere District, has witnessed an increasing participation of women in SSIs, contributing to regional economic growth. This paper examines the role of SSIs in empowering women in the district, identifying key opportunities and challenges.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the role of SSIs in promoting women empowerment in Davangere District.
2. To examine the socio-economic impact of SSIs on women entrepreneurs and workers.
3. To identify the challenges faced by women in small-scale industries.
4. To suggest policy measures for enhancing women's participation in SSIs.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive and analytical

Data Collection:

- **Primary Data:** Surveys, interviews, and case studies of women entrepreneurs and workers in Davangere District.
- **Secondary Data:** Government reports, journal articles, and industry reports on SSIs and women empowerment.

Sample Size: 100 women entrepreneurs and employees from different small-scale industries in Davangere District.

Sampling Technique: Random and purposive sampling

4. Literature Review

According to the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), women-led SSIs contribute to employment generation and poverty alleviation. Research also indicates that women face barriers such as lack of financial assistance, inadequate training, and societal restrictions. This study builds on these insights by focusing on Davangere District's unique socio-economic conditions.

According to **Kabeer (1999)**, economic participation through small enterprises enhances women's decision-making ability within households and communities.

Sen (2005) discussed the social implications of women's economic participation, stating that financial independence often leads to greater social respect and reduced gender disparity.

Studies have shown that SSIs contribute significantly to financial independence among women. **Banerjee & Duflo (2011)** argued that micro and small enterprises help women transition from informal labor to formal income-generating activities.

Sharma (2012) emphasized that SSIs provide flexible employment opportunities for women, enabling them to balance work and family responsibilities effectively.

Research by **Mukherjee (2015)** found that women engaged in small businesses reported increased savings, better access to financial resources, and improved standards of living.

5. Small Scale Industries in Davangere District

Davangere is known for its agro-based industries, textile manufacturing, handicrafts, and food processing industries. The district has seen a rise in women-led micro-enterprises, particularly in:

Handicrafts and Weaving: Women artisans play a key role in the district's traditional textile industry.

Food Processing: Women-run small food businesses, including spice grinding, pickles, and bakery products.

Retail and Home-Based Enterprises: Women engage in self-employment through tailoring, beauty parlors, and cottage industries.

6. Impact of SSIs on Women Empowerment

6.1 Economic Empowerment:

- Employment Generation – SSIs provide job opportunities to women, helping them achieve financial independence.
- Income Generation – Women involved in SSIs gain regular earnings, improving their economic status.
- Entrepreneurship Development – Many SSIs encourage women to start their own businesses, promoting self-reliance.
- Financial Inclusion – Access to microfinance and credit facilities helps women expand their businesses.

6.2 Social Empowerment:

- Improved Social Status – Economic independence enhances women's decision-making power in families and communities.

- Skill Development – Training programs in SSIs enhance women's technical and managerial skills.
- Reduction in Gender Disparity – SSIs promote gender equality by encouraging women's participation in economic activities.
- Work-Life Balance – Many SSIs allow women to work from home, balancing family responsibilities.

6.3 Psychological & Political Empowerment:

- Increased Self-Confidence – Economic contributions boost women's self-esteem and confidence.
- Leadership Development – Women entrepreneurs and workers gain leadership skills, enabling them to take active roles in society.
- Participation in Decision-Making – Financial independence allows women to have a say in household and community decisions.
- Political Awareness – Exposure to business activities increases women's awareness of their rights and government schemes.

6.4 Regional Development & Economic Growth:

- Reduction in Migration – SSIs provide local employment opportunities, reducing migration to urban areas.
- Boost to Rural Economy – Women-led SSIs contribute to rural economic growth.
- Innovation & Sustainability – Women entrepreneurs in SSIs drive innovation in traditional and eco-friendly products.

7. Challenges Faced by Women in SSIs

- Limited Access to Finance: Women struggle to obtain bank loans and government funding.
- Lack of Market Access: Difficulty in expanding businesses due to limited networks.
- Gender Bias: Societal norms restrict women's mobility and business growth.
- Lack of Training and Awareness: Limited exposure to modern business techniques and digital tools.
- Work-Life Balance: Managing household responsibilities alongside business activities can be challenging.

8. Government Initiatives and Support

- Several government schemes and policies aim to promote women entrepreneurs in SSIs, including:
- MUDRA Scheme: Provides financial assistance to women entrepreneurs.
- Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP): Supports skill development and market access.
- Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC): Encourages women-led businesses.

9. Suggestions and Recommendations

9.1. Policy and Government Support

- **Strengthening Government Schemes:** Improve awareness and accessibility of government schemes like MUDRA loans, PMEGP, and MSME support programs for women entrepreneurs.
- **Subsidized Credit Facilities:** Provide low-interest loans and grants to encourage women to start and expand SSIs.
- **Simplified Registration Process:** Reduce bureaucratic hurdles and simplify the registration process for SSIs to encourage more women entrepreneurs.

9.2. Financial Inclusion and Support

- **Microfinance and SHG Support:** Strengthen Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and cooperative societies to provide financial assistance and business training.
- **Subsidized Raw Materials:** Provide subsidies or discounts on essential raw materials to improve cost-effectiveness.
- **Tax Benefits and Incentives:** Offer tax exemptions and financial incentives for women-led SSIs.

9.3. Skill Development and Capacity Building

- **Entrepreneurial Training Programs:** Organize training workshops on business management, marketing, digital literacy, and financial planning.
- **Technical Skill Enhancement:** Promote vocational training programs tailored to SSIs such as handicrafts, textiles, food processing, and agro-based industries.
- **Networking and Mentorship:** Establish mentorship programs where successful women entrepreneurs can guide aspiring businesswomen.

9.4. Market Access and Digital Integration

- **E-commerce and Digital Marketing:** Encourage women entrepreneurs to leverage digital platforms for product promotion and sales.
- **Exhibition and Trade Fairs:** Organize local and national trade fairs to showcase products from women-led SSIs.
- **Supply Chain Integration:** Create linkages between SSIs and large industries to ensure a steady market for their products.

9.5. Social and Cultural Transformation

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct community programs to change societal perceptions about women entrepreneurs.
- **Support from Family and Society:** Encourage family and community support to help women balance business and household responsibilities.
- **Safety and Workplace Policies:** Implement better working conditions, safety measures, and anti-harassment policies in SSIs.

9.6. Technology and Innovation Adoption

- **Access to Modern Equipment:** Provide affordable and advanced machinery to improve productivity.
- **Encouraging Innovation:** Promote research and development in women-led SSIs for new product designs and sustainable practices.

9.7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Regular Surveys and Studies:** Conduct periodic impact assessments to understand the progress and challenges faced by women in SSIs.

- Public-Private Partnerships: Encourage collaboration between government, private sector, and NGOs to create a sustainable ecosystem for women entrepreneurs.

10. Conclusion

Small Scale Industries play a crucial role in women empowerment in Davangere District, Karnataka. Despite significant progress, women continue to face financial, social, and institutional challenges. By addressing these barriers through government initiatives, financial inclusion, and skill development programs, SSIs can further enhance women's economic independence and social standing.

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