



Perception of UG Students in Women's Development in Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises: A Study in Karimnagar and Jagtial

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Abstract

Women are indispensable in the development of Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs/SSEs). Women's participation in Industrial development has gained significant attention as it drives economic growth, fosters innovation, promotes sustainability and creates a more inclusive and equitable society. This study explores the perceptions of undergraduate (UG) students in Women's Development in Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises especially in Karimnagar and Jagtial with regard to the role, challenges, and opportunities for women in MSEs/SSEs. This research used convenient sampling method. The sample size is 133 UG students from Karimnagar and Jagtial. The students were provided questionnaire in Google form through Whatsapp groups. The research tried to understand and know how UG students perceive women's contributions to MSEs, the hindrances they come across and the potential for their empowerment in this sector. The findings reveal that UG students not only recognized the importance of women in driving innovation and growth in MSEs but also identified few challenges such as gender discrimination, limited access to funding, and cultural barriers. Apart from that, the study focusses on the need for educational institutions to prepare women for leadership roles in MSEs through targeted training programs, mentorship opportunities, and gender-sensitive curricula. It also offers suitable suggestions for fostering an inclusive environment that supports women's development in MSEs.

Key words: Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Medium Scale Enterprises, Women in MSMEs/SMEs, Student Perception..

Introduction

Women play a vital role in the economic development of nations, particularly through their contributions to medium and small-scale enterprises (MSEs/SSEs). Globally, women entrepreneurship is recognized as a key driver of innovation, employment generation, and sustainable economic growth. In India, women constitute a significant portion of entrepreneurs in the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector, but their participation is often limited by financial constraints, social and cultural barriers, lack of education, and limited access to mentorship and leadership opportunities.

The success of MSEs depends not only on business skills but also on the supportive ecosystem surrounding women entrepreneurs, including family, society, educational institutions, and government policies. Understanding the perceptions of undergraduate students, who represent the future workforce and potential entrepreneurs, is crucial in shaping programs and initiatives that empower women in these sectors. This study focuses on Karimnagar and Jagtial districts, exploring students' awareness of MSEs, their perception of women's role, the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, and suggested measures to enhance women's development in MSEs.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- Assess the awareness of undergraduate students about Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs/SSEs).
- Examine students' perceptions of women's contributions and roles in MSEs.
- Identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs as perceived by students.
- Evaluate students' views on societal support, government policies, and education in promoting women entrepreneurship.
- Explore suggested measures to enhance women's development and participation in MSEs.
- Provide recommendations for educational institutions, policymakers, and society to empower women in entrepreneurship.

Limitations of the Study

- The study is restricted to undergraduate students in Karimnagar and Jagtial districts, so the findings may not be generalizable to all student populations or regions.
- Data was collected using convenient sampling through online questionnaires, which may introduce response bias.
- The study relies on self-reported perceptions, which could be influenced by students' personal experiences or awareness levels.
- The study focuses primarily on perceptions and suggested measures, not on actual performance or success rates of women in MSEs.
- Time and resource constraints limited the sample size to 133 students, which may affect the statistical representativeness.

Research Methodology

1. **Research Design-** This study adopts a descriptive research design to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students regarding women's development in Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs/SSEs) in Karimnagar and Jagtial districts. The descriptive approach helps to analyze and interpret students' awareness, attitudes, perceived challenges, and suggestions systematically.
2. **Population and Sample-**The target population for the study comprises undergraduate students (UG) from various courses in colleges located in Karimnagar and Jagtial. A total of 133 students participated in the study. The convenient sampling method was used to select respondents based on their accessibility and willingness to participate.
3. **Data Collection Tool-** Data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire included: Demographic details: Age, gender, district, course, and year of study. Closed-ended questions: Awareness of MSEs, perception of women's roles, challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, societal support, government policies, and empowerment potential. Open-ended questions: Suggestions to promote women's development and examples of successful women entrepreneurs.
4. **Data Collection Procedure-**The online questionnaire was shared through WhatsApp groups and other digital platforms to reach undergraduate students. The respondents were given adequate instructions and assurances of confidentiality before answering the questionnaire.
5. **Data Analysis Techniques-**The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as: Frequency distribution and percentages to present demographic details, awareness levels, perceptions, and suggestions. Cumulative percentages to understand the overall trends in students' responses. Tabular representation for clarity and easy interpretation. Open-ended responses were coded into common themes to identify the most frequently suggested measures for promoting women's development in MSEs.
6. **Ethical Considerations-** Respondents' voluntary participation was ensured. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained. Data collected was used solely for academic purposes related to this study.

Review of Literature

Women and Entrepreneurship - Various studies have highlighted the growing importance of women in entrepreneurship, especially in small and medium enterprises (SMEs/MSEs). According to Hisrich and Brush (1984), women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economic growth, innovation, and employment generation. Similarly, Kalyani (2017) observed that women in SMEs often face challenges such as limited access to finance, social and cultural barriers, and lack of managerial experience, which can impede their success.

Awareness and Participation of Women in MSEs- Research by Rani and Raju (2019) suggests that awareness about entrepreneurship opportunities is a key factor in women's participation. Educational exposure, training programs, and mentorship initiatives enhance women's confidence to start and manage small enterprises. However, studies also show that UG and PG students often have limited knowledge about women's roles in local MSEs, which affects their perception of women's economic contribution.

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs-Multiple studies highlight that women entrepreneurs encounter financial constraints, gender discrimination, social/family pressures, and restricted mobility (Deshpande, 2015; Singh & Kumar, 2020). These challenges not only limit women's ability to participate effectively but also reduce their motivation to take leadership roles in MSEs.

Role of Education and Training-Several researchers (Kabeer, 2012; Gupta & Sharma, 2018) emphasize that education, skill development, and training programs play a crucial role in preparing women for entrepreneurship and leadership in MSEs. Educational institutions can provide knowledge, mentorship, and exposure to business practices, which helps in overcoming social and structural barriers.

Government Policies and Societal Support-Studies indicate that government schemes, financial assistance, and social awareness programs are essential for promoting women entrepreneurship (Patel, 2016). However, the effectiveness of these programs often depends on awareness among potential women entrepreneurs and societal encouragement, which is still limited in many regions.

Perception of Students-Literature also suggests that student perceptions about women's roles in MSEs are important because they represent the future workforce and society. However, very few studies have examined UG students' perceptions specifically in smaller towns and districts, such as Karimnagar and Jagtial, creating a gap in understanding local youth awareness and attitudes toward women entrepreneurship.

Research Gap

Based on the literature review, the following gaps are identified:

- **Limited Local Studies:** Most research focuses on urban women entrepreneurs or national-level trends. There is little evidence on students' perceptions of women's participation in MSEs in smaller districts like Karimnagar and Jagtial.
- **Student Perspective:** Existing studies emphasize challenges faced by women or policy effectiveness, but few studies explore the viewpoint of undergraduate students, who are the future workforce and potential entrepreneurs themselves.
- **Holistic Understanding:** Previous research often examines single aspects—like financial barriers or training programs—without combining awareness, perception, challenges, empowerment potential, and suggested measures in a single study.
- **Gap in Open-Ended Insights:** There is a lack of qualitative insight on what students believe are the best measures to promote women's development in MSEs, including educational programs, mentorship, and societal support.

Conclusion of Literature Review and Gap:

While the role of women in MSEs and the challenges they face are widely studied, there is a lack of research focusing on undergraduate students' perceptions in smaller districts. This study addresses the gap by examining UG students' awareness, attitudes, perceived challenges, and suggested measures for promoting women's development in MSEs in Karimnagar and Jagtial, providing both quantitative and qualitative insights.

Analysis and Interpretation of Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Age	Below 18	34	25.6	25.6
	18–20	41	30.8	56.4
	21–23	31	23.3	79.7
	Above 23	27	20.3	100.0
Gender	Male	64	48.1	48.1
	Female	53	39.8	88.0
	Prefer not to say	16	12.0	100.0
District	Karimnagar	78	58.6	58.6
	Jagtial	55	41.4	100.0
Course of Study	B.Com	35	26.3	26.3
	B.A	36	27.1	53.4
	B.Sc	17	12.8	66.2
	BBA	32	24.1	90.2
	Other	13	9.8	100.0
Year of Study	I Year	61	45.9	45.9
	II Year	46	34.6	80.5
	III Year	26	19.5	100.0

The study collected responses from 133 undergraduate students pursuing different courses in Karimnagar and Jagtial districts. The above table presents demographic details as follows-

Age-The data indicates that the largest portion of respondents (30.8%) fall within the 18–20 years category. Another 25.6% are below 18 years, while 23.3% are aged between 21–23 years, and 20.3% are above 23 years. It can be concluded that most participants are young adults in the traditional college age bracket, reflecting the active involvement of youth in academic and social studies.

Gender-Out of the total participants, 48.1% were male, 39.8% were female, and 12% chose not to mention their gender. It can be concluded that both male and female students contributed to the research, with males being slightly higher in number. The inclusion of participants preferring not to disclose gender adds inclusivity to the study.

District-It is observed that 58.6% of the respondents belong to Karimnagar district, whereas 41.4% are from Jagtial district. This shows a balanced geographical spread of responses, ensuring representation from both areas where the study was focused.

Course of Study-Regarding academic streams, 27.1% of respondents were enrolled in B.A, followed by 26.3% in B.Com, 24.1% in BBA, 12.8% in B.Sc, and 9.8% in other courses. It can be inferred that opinions were collected from students pursuing both commerce and non-commerce backgrounds, giving the study a broader academic scope.

Year of Study-The distribution by year shows that 45.9% of students were in their first year, 34.6% in the second year, and 19.5% in the final year. It can be concluded that a majority of respondents were in the early stages of their undergraduate education, indicating growing awareness and interest in socio-economic topics among newer batches.

Overall Interpretation of demographic variables states that the respondent group is diverse and well-balanced in terms of age, gender, district, and course background. Most participants are young undergraduates, predominantly from Karimnagar, and represent a variety of disciplines and study years. Such diversity ensures that the study captures a wide range of perceptions and provides a reliable understanding of how UG students view women's participation and development in Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs) in the selected districts.

Are you aware of **Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs/SSEs

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	45	33.8	33.8	33.8
No	54	40.6	40.6	74.4
Not Sure	34	25.6	25.6	100.0
Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Analysis and Interpretation

The above table shows the awareness level of undergraduate students about Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs/SSEs). Out of the total 133 respondents, 45 students (33.8%) said that they are aware of MSEs, while 54 students (40.6%) said they are not aware of them. Another 34 students (25.6%) mentioned that they are not sure about it.

This means that more than one-third of the students are not familiar with the concept of MSEs, and only a few have clear knowledge about it. It shows that there is a lack of proper awareness among undergraduate students regarding the role and importance of MSEs in the economy.

The result also indicates a need to include more practical exposure and information about small and medium enterprises in college-level studies so that students can understand how they contribute to economic growth and women's development.

Do you think **women play an important role** in the development of MSEs/SSEs?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	26	19.5	19.5	19.5
Disagree	23	17.3	17.3	36.8
Neutral	22	16.5	16.5	53.4
Agree	37	27.8	27.8	81.2
Strongly Agree	25	18.8	18.8	100.0
Total	133	100.0	100.0	

The table shows the opinion of students about whether women play an important role in the development of Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs/SSEs). Out of 133 respondents, 37 students (27.8%) agreed and 25 students (18.8%) strongly agreed that women have an important role in MSEs. Together, this makes around 46.6% of students who have a positive opinion.

On the other hand, 26 students (19.5%) strongly disagreed and 23 students (17.3%) disagreed with the statement, which shows that 36.8% of the respondents don't think women play a major role. Around 22 students (16.5%) remained neutral, meaning they are not sure or have no clear opinion.

From this, it can be understood that most students have a favorable view towards women's participation in MSEs, but there is still a noticeable portion who are unaware or doubtful about women's actual contribution. This may be because of less exposure to real-life examples of women entrepreneurs or limited discussions about their success in small-scale industries.

Overall, the results show a positive but mixed perception, highlighting the need for more awareness programs and success stories to motivate students about women's active role in MSEs.

According to you, what are the ****main areas**** where women contribute to MSEs?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Entrepreneurship	15	11.3	11.3	11.3
	Management	17	12.8	12.8	24.1
	Marketing	21	15.8	15.8	39.8
	Production	36	27.1	27.1	66.9
	All of the above	44	33.1	33.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

The table shows the students' opinion about the main areas where women contribute in Medium and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSEs). Out of 133 respondents, 44 students (33.1%) said that women contribute in all areas like entrepreneurship, management, marketing, and production. Around 36 students (27.1%) believed that women mainly contribute in the production sector, while 21 students (15.8%) said their major role is in marketing. Another 17 students (12.8%) felt women are active in management, and 15 students (11.3%) said women mostly engage in entrepreneurship.

This shows that a majority of students (one-third) think women are capable of contributing in every area of MSEs, not just in one particular field. It also indicates that students recognize women's multifunctional role and their ability to manage both production and administrative tasks.

At the same time, the focus on production and marketing areas suggests that students mostly see women's involvement in operational and creative parts of small industries.

Overall, it can be said that students have a positive view about women's participation and believe that women can perform effectively in different segments of MSEs.

Do you believe women entrepreneurs face ****unique challenges**** in MSEs?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	75	56.4	56.4	56.4
	No	42	31.6	31.6	88.0
	Not Sure	16	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

The table shows students' views on whether women entrepreneurs face unique challenges in MSEs. Out of 133 respondents, 56.4% said yes, indicating that they believe women encounter difficulties such as lack of financial support, gender discrimination, and family responsibilities. About 31.6% said no, suggesting they feel men and women have equal opportunities, while 12% were not sure, possibly due to limited exposure or knowledge. Overall,

the results show that a majority of students recognize the special challenges faced by women in small and medium enterprises, though a significant portion still either disagrees or is uncertain.

How do you rate the ****overall participation of women**** in local MSEs in Karimnagar and Jagtial

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Low	25	18.8	18.8	18.8
	Low	26	19.5	19.5	38.3
	Moderate	20	15.0	15.0	53.4
	High	38	28.6	28.6	82.0
	Very High	24	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

The table represents students’ assessment of the overall participation of women in local MSEs in Karimnagar and Jagtial. Out of 133 respondents, 28.6% rated it as high and 18% as very high, showing that nearly half of the students perceive women’s participation positively. On the other hand, 18.8% rated it very low and 19.5% as low, indicating that some students feel women are still underrepresented. About 15% considered it moderate. Overall, the findings suggest a mixed perception, with a slight leaning toward recognizing women’s significant contribution, but also highlighting that there is room for improvement in women’s involvement in local MSEs.

Challenges Frequencies

Challenges	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Lack of financial support	54	12.5%	40.6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Gender discrimination	79	18.3%	59.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Family and social pressures	79	18.3%	59.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of education/training	54	12.5%	40.6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Limited mobility	79	18.3%	59.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	87	20.1%	65.4%
Total	432	100.0%	324.8%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Students’ perception of women’s participation in MSEs in Karimnagar and Jagtial shows that 46.6% rated it as high or very high, indicating that nearly half of the respondents believe women are actively involved in these enterprises. However, a significant portion (around 38%) rated participation as low or very low, and 15% considered it moderate, suggesting there is still room for improvement and encouragement. Regarding the challenges faced by women, students identified multiple barriers, with the most common being gender discrimination, family and social pressures, and limited mobility (each 59.4%), followed by lack of financial support and education/training (40.6%), and other challenges (65.4%). This shows that students are aware of both social and structural obstacles that limit women’s effective participation in MSEs, highlighting the need for supportive policies, training programs, and awareness initiatives to empower women entrepreneurs.

Do you think ****society encourages women**** to become entrepreneurs in MSEs?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	26	19.5	19.5	19.5
	Disagree	27	20.3	20.3	39.8
	Neutral	22	16.5	16.5	56.4
	Agree	32	24.1	24.1	80.5
	Strongly Agree	26	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Out of 133 respondents, 32 students (24.1%) agreed and 26 students (19.5%) strongly agreed, together making 43.6% who feel society provides encouragement. On the other hand, 27 students (20.3%) disagreed and 26 students (19.5%) strongly disagreed, showing that 39.8% believe society does not support women entrepreneurs. The remaining 16.5% were neutral, indicating uncertainty or lack of opinion. Overall, the results suggest a mixed perception among students, with slightly more believing that society encourages women, but a significant number still feel that social support is lacking for women pursuing entrepreneurship in MSEs.

How far do ****government policies**** support women in small and medium enterprises?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not supportive	26	19.5	19.5	19.5
	Neutral	23	17.3	17.3	36.8
	Somewhat supportive	28	21.1	21.1	57.9
	Highly supportive	30	22.6	22.6	80.5
	No Idea	26	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Out of 133 respondents, 30 students (22.6%) felt the policies are highly supportive and 28 students (21.1%) said they are somewhat supportive, together making 43.7% who recognize positive government efforts. On the other hand, 26 students (19.5%) felt policies are not supportive, and another 26 students (19.5%) had no idea about government initiatives. Additionally, 23 students (17.3%) were neutral. These results indicate that while some students are aware of supportive policies, a significant portion either lacks awareness or feels the policies are insufficient, highlighting the need for better communication and implementation of government schemes to empower women entrepreneurs.

Do you think ****MSEs can empower women economically and socially****?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	16.5	16.5	16.5
	Disagree	27	20.3	20.3	36.8
	Neutral	13	9.8	9.8	46.6
	Agree	44	33.1	33.1	79.7
	Strongly Agree	27	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Out of 133 respondents, 44 students (33.1%) agreed and 27 students (20.3%) strongly agreed, together making 53.4% who believe that MSEs provide economic and social empowerment to women. On the other hand, 27 students (20.3%) disagreed and 22 students (16.5%) strongly disagreed, showing that 36.8% of students are skeptical about the empowerment potential of MSEs. The remaining 13 students (9.8%) were neutral. Overall, the results suggest

that a majority of students recognize the positive impact of MSEs on women’s economic and social status, though a notable minority remains doubtful or unconvinced.

Financial assistance schemes Frequencies

Financial assistance schemes	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Financial assistance schemes	78	20.5%	58.6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Skill development programs	79	20.7%	59.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentorship and training	54	14.2%	40.6%
<input type="checkbox"/> Family and social support	79	20.7%	59.4%
<input type="checkbox"/> All of the above	91	23.9%	68.4%
Total	381	100.0%	286.5%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The table shows students’ opinions on which measures can encourage more women to participate in MSEs. Out of the multiple responses, 91 students (68.4%) chose “all of the above”, indicating that a combination of support is most effective. Individually, financial assistance schemes were selected by 78 students (58.6%), skill development programs by 79 students (59.4%), mentorship and training by 54 students (40.6%), and family and social support by 79 students (59.4%). This suggests that students believe women’s participation in MSEs can be significantly improved through a holistic approach, combining financial, educational, social, and mentorship support rather than relying on a single type of intervention.

Should **colleges introduce special programs** to promote women entrepreneurship?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	52	39.1	39.1	39.1
	No	49	36.8	36.8	75.9
	May be	32	24.1	24.1	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Out of 133 respondents, 52 students (39.1%) said yes, showing support for dedicated programs, while 49 students (36.8%) said no, indicating some skepticism about their effectiveness. The remaining 32 students (24.1%) were unsure (“may be”), suggesting indecision or lack of clear knowledge about the potential impact. Overall, the results indicate that a significant portion of students favors special college initiatives, though nearly an equal number are hesitant or uncertain, highlighting the need for awareness and discussion about such programs.

Do you think **education plays a key role** in preparing women for leadership roles in MSEs?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	16.5	16.5	16.5
	Disagree	27	20.3	20.3	36.8
	Neutral	20	15.0	15.0	51.9
	Agree	37	27.8	27.8	79.7
	Strongly Agree	27	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Out of 133 respondents, 37 students (27.8%) agreed and 27 students (20.3%) strongly agreed, together making 48.1% who believe education is important for leadership development. On the other hand, 27 students (20.3%) disagreed and 22 students (16.5%) strongly disagreed, showing that 36.8% of students are skeptical about the role of education in this context. The remaining 20 students (15%) were neutral, indicating uncertainty. Overall, the results suggest that nearly half of the students recognize education as a crucial factor in preparing women for leadership in MSEs, though a significant portion still questions its impact.

Suggested Measure	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Financial support / loans / subsidies	62	46.6
Skill development and training programs	54	40.6
Mentorship / guidance / leadership programs	48	36.1
Awareness and motivational programs	40	30.1
Family and social support / gender equality initiatives	50	37.6
All of the above / combined measures	67	50.4

The table shows that students suggested multiple measures to promote women's development in MSEs. The majority (50.4%) recommended combined or holistic measures, indicating that students feel empowerment requires support on several fronts simultaneously. Financial support (46.6%) was the most frequently mentioned single measure, highlighting the importance of easy access to funding. Many students also emphasized skill development (40.6%) and mentorship programs (36.1%), showing that training and guidance are seen as crucial for women entrepreneurs. Additionally, family and social support (37.6%) and awareness/motivation programs (30.1%) were suggested, indicating that students recognize social and cultural factors as significant barriers.

Overall, the responses reflect that students believe a combination of financial, educational, social, and motivational measures is essential to empower women in MSEs effectively.

Response Category	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Named a local successful woman entrepreneur	72	54.1
Could not name / no response	61	45.9
Total	133	100.0

The table shows that 54.1% of students could name at least one successful woman entrepreneur from their area, indicating moderate awareness of local women achievers in MSEs. However, 45.9% of respondents could not name anyone, which suggests that nearly half of the students are either unaware or lack exposure to successful women entrepreneurs locally. This reflects a need for greater visibility, case studies, and awareness programs in colleges to showcase women's achievements in small and medium enterprises.

Findings

Demographic Profile:

- Majority of respondents (30.8%) were aged 18–20 years, and slightly more were male (48.1%) than female.
- Most students were from Karimnagar (58.6%), representing a balanced geographical distribution.
- Respondents came from diverse courses: B.A (27.1%), B.Com (26.3%), BBA (24.1%), and B.Sc (12.8%).
- Majority were first-year students (45.9%), followed by second- and third-year students.

Awareness about MSEs/SSEs:

- Only 33.8% of students were aware of MSEs, 40.6% were not aware, and 25.6% were unsure, indicating moderate awareness among UG students.

Perception of Women's Role in MSEs:

- Around 46.6% of students agreed or strongly agreed that women play an important role in MSEs, while 36.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, showing a positive but mixed perception.
- Students recognize women's contributions mainly in production (27.1%), marketing (15.8%), management (12.8%), entrepreneurship (11.3%), and all areas (33.1%).

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs:

- Major challenges identified include gender discrimination, family and social pressures, and limited mobility (59.4% each), followed by financial and educational barriers (40.6%).
- Students are aware that women face both social and structural obstacles in MSEs.

Perception of Societal Support and Government Policies:

- Mixed perception: 43.6% of students feel society encourages women, while 39.8% disagree.
- Regarding government policies, 43.7% felt policies are supportive, while 19.5% felt they are not supportive and 19.5% had no idea, showing moderate awareness of government initiatives.

Empowerment through MSEs:

- 53.4% of respondents agreed that MSEs can economically and socially empower women, though 36.8% disagreed, showing that students largely recognize the potential for empowerment.

Measures to Promote Women's Development:

- Students suggested combined measures (50.4%), including financial support (46.6%), skill development (40.6%), mentorship (36.1%), family and social support (37.6%), and awareness programs (30.1%).
- They also recommended special college programs (39.1%) to promote women entrepreneurship.

Role of Education:

- 48.1% of students agreed that education plays a key role in preparing women for leadership roles in MSEs, while 36.8% disagreed, emphasizing that education is recognized as important but not universally accepted.

Awareness of Successful Women Entrepreneurs:

- 54.1% of students could name a successful woman entrepreneur from their area, while 45.9% could not, showing moderate visibility of role models.

Conclusion

The study reveals that undergraduate students recognize the importance of women in the development of MSEs, acknowledging their contributions across entrepreneurship, management, marketing, and production. While students are aware of the challenges women face—such as gender discrimination, social pressures, and limited access to financial and educational resources—they also perceive MSEs as a potential platform for economic and social empowerment. Awareness about government policies and societal support is moderate, and the majority of students advocate for holistic measures combining financial, educational, social, and motivational support. The findings highlight the need for increased awareness, practical exposure, and structured programs in educational institutions to encourage women entrepreneurship and leadership in small and medium enterprises.

Suggestions

- ❖ Enhance Awareness Programs: Colleges should organize seminars, workshops, and campaigns to educate students about MSEs and women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Financial Support & Incentives: Governments and banks should provide easy access to loans, subsidies, and grants specifically targeted at women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Skill Development & Training: Conduct vocational, managerial, and technical training programs to enhance women's capabilities in MSEs.
- ❖ Mentorship and Guidance: Establish mentorship and leadership programs connecting experienced women entrepreneurs with young women students.
- ❖ Social & Family Support Initiatives: Encourage family and community support for women pursuing entrepreneurship through awareness campaigns.
- ❖ Policy Awareness & Implementation: Promote government schemes and policies effectively among students and women entrepreneurs to increase participation.
- ❖ Educational Programs in Colleges: Introduce special programs or courses on entrepreneurship to prepare women for leadership and decision-making roles.
- ❖ Highlight Role Models: Showcase successful women entrepreneurs from local areas to inspire students and increase visibility of opportunities.
- ❖ Holistic Approach: Implement combined measures including financial, educational, social, and motivational support to maximize women's development in MSEs.

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