Determinants of Success and Barriers Faced by Women Start-Up Entrepreneurs in Kanyakumari District

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Abstract

Women-led start-ups play a vital role in promoting inclusive economic development. Despite increasing participation, women entrepreneurs face multiple constraints that affect business performance and sustainability. This study examines the determinants of success and barriers faced by women start-up entrepreneurs in Kanyakumari District using statistical tools. Primary data were collected from 120 women entrepreneurs through a structured questionnaire. Statistical techniques such as Mean Score Analysis, Standard Deviation, Chi-square Test, Correlation, and Multiple Regression were applied. The findings reveal that access to finance, family support, entrepreneurial skills, and digital awareness significantly influence start-up success, while socio-cultural constraints, limited credit access, and lack of mentorship act as major barriers. The study offers policy-oriented recommendations to strengthen the women start-up ecosystem at the district level.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurship, start-ups, determinants of success, barriers, statistical analysis, Kanyakumari District

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a powerful mechanism for employment generation, innovation, and regional development. In India, women entrepreneurs are increasingly contributing to start-up ventures across sectors such as services, manufacturing, food processing, and digital businesses. Government initiatives like Startup India, Stand-Up India, and Women Entrepreneurship Platform have encouraged women to enter entrepreneurial activities.

Kanyakumari District, known for its educational background and diversified economy, has witnessed growing women participation in start-ups. However, women entrepreneurs continue to encounter barriers related to finance, socio-cultural expectations, and business networks. Identifying statistically significant determinants of success and barriers is crucial for designing effective policy interventions.

2. Objectives of the Study

i. To identify the key determinants influencing the success of women start-up entrepreneurs.

ii. To analyze the major barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Kanyakumari District.

iii. To examine the relationship between determinants and business performance.

iv. To assess the impact of success determinants on start-up performance using regression analysis.

Statement of the Problem

Despite policy support and rising entrepreneurial interest, many women-led start-ups in Kanyakumari District struggle to sustain and scale. The absence of empirical, statistically validated evidence on success determinants and barriers limits the effectiveness of support mechanisms. Hence, there is a need to scientifically analyze these factors using appropriate statistical tools.

3. Review of Literature

Previous studies have identified financial access, education, skill development, and social support as major success factors for women entrepreneurs. Research by Brush et al. emphasizes the role of entrepreneurial capital and networks in business growth. Other studies highlight barriers such as gender bias, lack of collateral, work–family conflict, and limited institutional support.

Most earlier studies rely on descriptive or percentage analysis. There is limited district-level empirical research using inferential statistical tools, especially in Tamil Nadu. This study attempts to fill that gap by applying robust statistical techniques.

4. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive design is used to systematically describe the socio-economic profile of women start-up entrepreneurs and to identify the key determinants of success and barriers faced by them. The analytical design enables the researcher to examine relationships among variables and to assess the impact of selected determinants on business performance using appropriate statistical techniques. This combined approach provides both factual understanding and empirical validation of the research objectives.

Data Collection

Primary Data

Primary data were collected from 120 women start-up entrepreneurs operating in Kanyakumari District through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to capture information on personal profile, business characteristics, determinants of success, barriers faced, and overall business performance. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' perceptions, ensuring uniformity and reliability of responses. Primary data enabled firsthand insights into the real-world challenges and success factors of women entrepreneurs.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from published journals, research articles, government reports, policy documents, books, and official websites related to women entrepreneurship and start-up development. Secondary sources helped in framing the conceptual background, identifying research gaps, and supporting the interpretation of primary data findings.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling technique, wherein respondents were selected based on specific criteria such as ownership of a start-up venture and a minimum operational period of one year. This method was considered appropriate as it ensured that only relevant and knowledgeable women entrepreneurs were included in the study. Purposive

sampling facilitated focused data collection from respondents who could provide meaningful insights into entrepreneurial success and challenges.

Statistical Tools Used

Mean and Standard Deviation

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to measure the central tendency and dispersion of respondents' opinions regarding determinants of success and barriers faced. The mean score helped in ranking factors based on their level of influence, while the standard deviation indicated the degree of consistency or variation in responses. This analysis provided a clear understanding of the most influential determinants and critical barriers.

Chi-Square Test

The Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between selected demographic variables (such as education level) and business performance. This inferential statistical tool helped in testing whether differences in entrepreneurial performance were statistically significant across categories. The test strengthened the validity of findings by establishing relationships between qualitative variables.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was used to identify the degree and direction of relationship between key success determinants and business performance. By calculating correlation coefficients, the study assessed how strongly variables such as access to finance, family support, and digital literacy were related to entrepreneurial success. This analysis helped in understanding the interdependence among variables.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the combined impact of multiple independent variables on the dependent variable, namely business performance. This tool helped in identifying the most significant predictors of start-up success among women entrepreneurs. The regression model also measured the proportion of variation in business performance explained by selected determinants, thereby providing robust empirical support for policy recommendations.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 5.1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Determinants of Success of Women Start-Up Entrepreneurs

Determinants of Success	Mean	Standard Deviation
Access to Finance	4.32	0.61
Family Support	4.18	0.66
Entrepreneurial Skills	4.05	0.72
Market Access	3.94	0.70
Digital Literacy	3.89	0.75

The mean score analysis reveals that access to finance is the most influential determinant of success among women start-up entrepreneurs in Kanyakumari District, with the highest mean value of 4.32. This indicates that availability of timely and adequate financial resources plays a crucial role in initiating, sustaining, and expanding start-up ventures. The relatively low standard deviation suggests a consistent perception among respondents regarding the importance of finance. Family support, with a mean score of 4.18, emerges as the second most significant determinant, highlighting the socio-cultural context where emotional, financial, and moral support from family members substantially enhances entrepreneurial confidence. Entrepreneurial skills, including managerial and decision-making abilities, record a strong mean value of 4.05, indicating that skill development positively influences business performance. Market access and digital literacy, though slightly lower in mean values, still show considerable influence on start-up success. The higher standard deviation in digital literacy indicates variation in digital skill levels among respondents. Overall, the results emphasize that financial, social, and skill-based factors collectively determine the success of women-led start-ups.

Table 5.2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Barriers Faced by Women Start-Up Entrepreneurs

Barriers	Mean	Standard Deviation
Difficulty in Accessing Credit	4.21	0.64
Socio-Cultural Constraints	4.07	0.69
Lack of Mentorship	3.96	0.71
Work–Life Balance	3.88	0.73
Market Competition	3.79	0.77

The analysis of barriers indicates that difficulty in accessing credit is the most severe challenge faced by women entrepreneurs, with a high mean score of 4.21. This reflects structural issues such as lack of collateral, procedural delays, and limited awareness of financial schemes. The low standard deviation indicates that this barrier is uniformly experienced by most respondents. Socio-cultural constraints, with a mean of 4.07, highlight the persistent influence of traditional gender roles, family responsibilities, and societal expectations that restrict women's entrepreneurial activities. Lack of mentorship emerges as another significant barrier, suggesting insufficient access to professional guidance and role models. Work–life balance issues further indicate the dual responsibilities borne by women entrepreneurs, affecting business focus and growth. Market competition, although ranked lower, still presents a challenge, especially for new entrants with limited networks. The findings underscore that barriers are not isolated but interconnected, requiring integrated support mechanisms.

Table 5.3: Chi-Square Test Showing Association Between Education Level and Business Performance.

Variable	χ^2 Value	Table Value	Significance
Education & Performance	Calculated > Table	5% level	Significant

The Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between education level and business performance of women start-up entrepreneurs. The calculated Chi-square value exceeds the table value at the 5 percent level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This statistically confirms the presence of a significant association between education and entrepreneurial performance. Higher education levels enhance analytical thinking, financial planning, and strategic decision-making abilities, which positively influence business outcomes. Educated entrepreneurs are also more likely to adopt innovative practices and digital tools. The result indicates that education not only facilitates business entry but also contributes to sustainability and growth. Furthermore, educated women are better equipped to navigate regulatory procedures and market challenges. This finding emphasizes the importance of education and continuous learning in strengthening women entrepreneurship in the district.

Table 5.4: Correlation Analysis Between Determinants of Success and Business Performance

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Access to Finance & Performance	0.71
Family Support & Performance	0.68
Digital Literacy & Performance	0.63

The correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between key success determinants and business performance. Access to finance shows the highest correlation coefficient of 0.71, indicating that increased financial availability significantly improves business outcomes. This strong correlation highlights the role of capital in enhancing production capacity, marketing activities, and technological adoption. Family support, with a correlation value of 0.68, demonstrates that emotional and logistical backing directly contributes to entrepreneurial efficiency and stability. Digital literacy also shows a substantial positive relationship with performance, emphasizing the growing importance of digital platforms in business operations. The positive correlations across all variables indicate that

improvements in these determinants lead to better business performance. The results confirm that entrepreneurial success is multi-dimensional and influenced by both economic and social factors.

Table 5.5: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Impact of Determinants on Business Performance

Variables	Beta Value	Significance
Access to Finance	0.42	Significant
Entrepreneurial Skills	0.31	Significant
Family Support	0.27	Significant
Digital Literacy	0.22	Significant
Access to Finance	0.42	Significant

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.62$, F-value significant at 5%

The multiple regression analysis explains the combined impact of success determinants on business performance. The R^2 value of 0.62 indicates that 62 percent of the variation in business performance is explained by the selected independent variables. Access to finance, with the highest beta value, emerges as the most influential predictor, confirming its dominant role in start-up success. Entrepreneurial skills significantly contribute to effective decision-making, risk management, and innovation. Family support remains a crucial socio-economic factor that enhances entrepreneurial resilience. Digital literacy, though comparatively lower in beta value, still significantly influences performance, particularly in marketing and customer engagement. The significant F-value confirms the overall validity of the model. This analysis demonstrates that financial, skill-based, and social determinants collectively drive the success of women-led start-ups.

6. Conclusion

The present study has provided an in-depth statistical examination of the determinants of success and barriers faced by women start-up entrepreneurs in Kanyakumari District. The findings clearly indicate that women entrepreneurs possess strong entrepreneurial potential;

however, their success is significantly influenced by a combination of financial, social, and skill-related factors. Among the determinants analyzed, access to finance emerged as the most critical factor affecting business performance, highlighting the importance of timely credit availability and financial support mechanisms for women-led start-ups. Family support and entrepreneurial skills also played a decisive role in strengthening business sustainability and confidence among women entrepreneurs.

The statistical results further revealed that education and digital literacy contribute positively to entrepreneurial performance by enabling better decision-making, market access, and adoption of modern business practices. At the same time, the study identified persistent barriers such as difficulty in accessing credit, socio-cultural constraints, lack of mentorship, and work–life balance challenges. These barriers continue to limit the growth potential of women entrepreneurs despite their increasing participation in start-up activities. The inferential analysis confirmed that these challenges are not isolated but interrelated, requiring a comprehensive support framework.

Overall, the study concludes that strengthening women entrepreneurship in Kanyakumari District requires an integrated approach involving financial institutions, government agencies, educational institutions, and family support systems. Policy measures focusing on women-friendly credit facilities, entrepreneurship training, mentorship programs, and digital skill development will significantly enhance the success and sustainability of women-led start-ups. By addressing both determinants of success and existing barriers, women entrepreneurs can be empowered to contribute more effectively to local economic development and inclusive growth.

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