**AWARENESS LEVEL OF FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN POLLACHI: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

**Abstract**

Now a days, entrepreneurship is globally recognised as a key catalyst for innovation, economic development, and job creation. Despite the governments and institutions’ efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship, there remains a gap in understanding the awareness and application of specific entrepreneurial skills. These include interpersonal communication, risk-taking, creativity, leadership, problem-solving, financial literacy, and decision-making skills essential for transforming entrepreneurial ideas into successful ventures. The study aims to assess the awareness level of female students regarding entrepreneurial skills, including interpersonal skills, risk-taking, creativity, leadership, problem-solving, financial literacy, and decision-making. The study is descriptive, empirical, and analytical. The primary data was collected from 128 female students from the Pollachi region. The study revealed that the majority of the students are moderately aware of entrepreneurial skills. Based on findings, proposals have been proposed to address the acknowledged difficulties for the progress of women's empowerment and enhance the practical implications of the study. The study proposed to evaluate the effectiveness of government initiatives to empower women entrepreneurs. If the recommended extents have been considered by the government and institutions, the female students will certainly shine and bring brilliance as women entrepreneurs.

***Keywords –*** *Women empowerment, Entrepreneurial skills****,*** *College students, Awareness, entrepreneur, economic development*

1. **Introduction**

An entrepreneur is a person who sets up a business or business, taking on financial risks in the hope of making a profit. This risk may sometimes turn into failure. But those entrepreneurs who are resilient are keen to survive. The word resilience refers to overcoming difficulties and performing better than expected (Sachdev, 2023). The term "entrepreneur" has its roots in the 13th-century French verb entreprendre, meaning “to undertake” or “to do something.” By the 16th century, the term evolved to signify an individual who initiates and manages a commercial venture. Today, entrepreneurship is globally recognised as a key catalyst for innovation, economic development, and job creation. Entrepreneurship can be considered as a process because discovering, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities involves a recursive and iterative progression of actions rather than a linear sequence of actions. Opportunities evolve and develop over time in a constant process of interactions between entrepreneurs’ actions and feedback. Specifically, entrepreneurs start with a basic idea of a product or service and then take action to elaborate on the idea. They learn from the feedback that results from their actions and iteratively modify their approach. In the iterative process of taking action, gathering information, and learning about the viability of the idea, entrepreneurs use feedback to continuously update the features of the business idea (Ratten, 2023). In India’s dynamic and competitive landscape, cultivating entrepreneurial skills among college students is seen as a crucial strategy to achieve economic self-reliance. Empowering students, especially women, with the necessary skills and mindset can help tackle issues like unemployment and drive inclusive growth.

Entrepreneurship research has evolved significantly over time. Starting with Shapero’s (1975) seminal work on entrepreneurial intention (EI), scholarly efforts have progressively expanded to examine a wide range of determinants. These determinants are often explored through psychological, social, and contextual dimensions **(Roy et al., 2017; Anwar & Saleem, 2019).** Studies indicate that both internal factors, such as personality traits, attitude towards behaviour, and perceived behavioural control **(Littunen, 2000; Brandstätter, 2011),** as well as external factors like social norms and environmental influences **(Fayolle, 2008; Zahra, 1995)**, significantly affect entrepreneurial behaviour. Moreover, a substantial body of literature affirms that education plays a pivotal role in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations. Educated individuals are more likely to initiate and sustain entrepreneurial ventures than those lacking formal education **(Kennedy & Drennan, 2001; Cooper et al., 1994)**. Accordingly, institutions have started fostering entrepreneurship by embedding it within the curriculum and establishing entrepreneurial cells, incubation centres, and start-up support systems.

Women's entrepreneurship at the base of the pyramid can offer a way out of poverty for families, foster the development of communities, and provide a route to modernising countries (Chatterjee et al., 2022). Despite the governments and institutions’ efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship, there remains a gap in understanding the awareness and application of specific entrepreneurial skills. These include interpersonal communication, risk-taking, creativity, leadership, problem-solving, financial literacy, and decision-making skills essential for transforming entrepreneurial ideas into successful ventures. This study, therefore, aims to assess the level of awareness among female college students regarding entrepreneurial skills. It seeks to identify existing gaps in the educational framework and examine how demographic variables influence students’ entrepreneurial skill development. This understanding is crucial for designing effective educational and policy interventions that promote women's entrepreneurship in semi-urban regions like Pollachi.

**II. Review of Literature**

The following review of literature is related to the current study.

Entrepreneurship education is widely recognised as a process that equips individuals with the capabilities to develop insights, identify opportunities, and acquire skills and knowledge essential for entrepreneurial action **(Kaltenecker et al., 2015)**. This educational foundation plays a vital role in nurturing entrepreneurial competencies, which are directly linked to improved economic performance and the fostering of a conducive global business environment **(Sanchez, 2013)**. However, studies show that awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities remains uneven across disciplines. For instance, it has been observed that a significant proportion of students in specialised fields such as physiotherapy lacked awareness of entrepreneurial avenues in their domain, despite expressing enthusiasm to learn more. This indicates a growing interest but insufficient exposure to entrepreneurship within specific academic streams.

Exploring gender dimensions, recent investigations have revealed that female students' entrepreneurial intentions are shaped by both internal and external factors. Gender inequality perceptions, levels of self-efficacy, and attitudes toward entrepreneurship significantly influence their entrepreneurial intentions. Moreover, perceived family support plays a moderating role, reinforcing or dampening these intentions based on the familial climate **(Vu et al., 2025)**. These findings underscore the importance of addressing socio-cultural and psychological barriers that uniquely impact female students.

In another line of inquiry, environmental factors have been shown to inspire entrepreneurial intent, particularly in the context of sustainability. Environmental awareness and concern are found to be powerful drivers, motivating individuals—especially youth—to initiate environmentally responsible ventures **(Schwegler & Petty, 2025)**. This broadens the scope of entrepreneurship beyond profit motives to include social and ecological impact. Social media has also emerged as a significant enabler in shaping entrepreneurial awareness. It has been found to influence students' attitudes and knowledge, acting as a motivational tool for innovation and skill-building. Platforms like these not only disseminate information but also serve as arenas for collaboration, networking, and exposure to entrepreneurial ecosystems **(Ruswaji et al., 2024).**

Further, evidence from Latin American and European contexts shows that university students, when adequately exposed to entrepreneurship education, often develop sustainable business models aimed at solving local and global problems. These students tend to show a preference for social entrepreneurship and actively apply classroom knowledge to real-world ventures **(Portuguez Castro & Gómez Zermeño, 2021)**.

Demographic factors such as gender and educational background also play a pivotal role. It has been noted that male students, particularly in the 31–45 age group, tend to exhibit stronger entrepreneurial intentions. Family background and support systems were also found to positively influence their entrepreneurial mindset **(Leong, 2008)**. Similarly, variations in aptitude skills, awareness of funding opportunities, and the mode of study significantly impact entrepreneurial preparedness among students **(Panikkar & Washington, 2011).**

Taken together, these studies suggest that entrepreneurship is a multi-faceted phenomenon influenced by personal attitudes, socio-cultural context, educational exposure, digital media, and demographic characteristics. The emerging literature underscores the importance of tailored interventions that enhance awareness and foster entrepreneurial intent, particularly among women students in underrepresented or semi-urban regions like Pollachi.

**III. Statement of the problem**

There is evidence, and an empirical gap exists in the field. A lot of studies have been conducted in large cities, among university students, and across all types of genders. But the current study focuses on colleges located in the semi-urban place of Pollachi. Particularly, the study samples are drawn from female students. In this study, the role of government and institutions in fostering entrepreneurship will be assessed.

**Leong, Chee Keong (2008),** in their study, suggested that the government should raise students' awareness of various avenues of and assist them in their business start-ups. The suggestions induced me to identify the government's role in making student entrepreneurs. So, the statement creates a curiosity to identify the main contributor who helps to gain knowledge about entrepreneurial skills. The following problem statement arose:

1.     Who is the main contributor to helping students gain knowledge towards entrepreneurial skills?

They also revealed that entrepreneurial intention among female students is low. The intention to become an entrepreneur is influenced by awareness. This leads to a curiosity to analyse the awareness mean difference among demographic groups.

2.     What is the mean difference between demographic variables and awareness of entrepreneurial skills?

**IV. Objectives**

The following are the objectives of the current study:

* To identify the persons who contributed to enhancing students' awareness of entrepreneurial skills.
* To investigate the significant mean difference between demographic variables and awareness.

**V. Research Methodology**

The study is descriptive, empirical, and analytical. The data was collected from students who studied in the Pollachi area institutions. The primary data was collected from 128 students through structured questionnaires using snowball sampling. The entrepreneurial awareness scale was administered, with proper identification of 23 skills that are required for entrepreneurs. The data was analysed through reliability, validity, the Levene test, descriptive statistics, the independent sample t-test, ANOVA, and post hoc analysis.

**VI. Analysis and Discussion**

**Measurement Quality Assessment**

The internal consistency of the awareness is calculated by employing a reliability test in SPSS 23. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of ≥ 0.70 was considered acceptable for internal consistency **(Cronbach, 1951).** The result specifies that the Cronbach's alpha value was .879, above the threshold value of .700. So, the data was reliable.

The violation of the normality assumption should not cause major problems for sample sizes above 30 or 40 **(Pallant, 2007)**. The central limit theorem states that in a large sample, the sampling mean distribution will be a normal distribution irrespective of the original distribution. A sample size of greater than 30 is considered a large population in the central limit theorem. If the conditions are met, the parametric procedures will follow even if the data are not normally distributed **(Elliott and Woodward, 2007).** The validity test of awareness of entrepreneurial skill was tested with the employment of Pearson correlations. The study depicted that the instrument is valid for conducting further research.

To measure the homogeneity of the data, the Levene test was employed. The Levene test specifies that two group variables, such as area of residence (F (126,128) = .008, p = .927), marital status (F (126,128) = 3.47, p = .065), type of family (F (126,128) = .217, p = .642), part-time job (F (126,128) = 2.30, p = .132), and entry of entrepreneurship (F (126,128) = .033, p = .856), are insignificant. This indicates that the assumption of homogeneity was not violated.

The Levene test specifies that more than two group demographic variables, such as age (F(2,125) = .659, p = .519), academic discipline of study (F(5,122) = 1.694, p = .141), academic level (F(3,124) = 1.184, p = .319), earning members in family (F(4,123) = .765, p = .550), non-earning members (F(2,125) = .159, p = .853), and family income (F(3,124) = 1.067, p = .366), are insignificant. This specifies that the principle of homogeneity was not violated.

**Descriptive statistics of demographic variables**

To describe the details of demographic variables, descriptive statistics such as range, minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness, kurtosis, and simple percentage were employed.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics for Age, earnings and non-earning members*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Age** | **Earning members** | **Non-earning members** |
| **Range** | 19 | 4 | 3 |
| **Minimum** | 17 | 1 | 1 |
| **Maximum** | 36 | 5 | 4 |
| **Mean** | 20.56 | 1.80 | 1.73 |
| **Standard deviation** | 2.73 | 0.84 | 1.07 |
| **Variance** | 7.48 | 0.69 | 1.15 |
| **Skewness** | 1.90 | 1.30 | 0.92 |
| **Kurtosis** | 7.63 | 2.49 | 0.86 |

*(Note- Primary data)*

The descriptive results showed that the average age of the respondents was 20.56 years (S.D. = 2.73) with a range from 19 to 36 years old. The distribution of age was positively skewed (skewness = 1.90) and leptokurtic (kurtosis = 7.63), indicating that most of the respondents clustered with the young age group, except some from the older age group.

            The average earnings of members of the family were 1.80. The skewness (1.30) and platykurtic (kurtosis = 2.49) indicate that most of the families have one or two earners, except some families have more. Non-earning members show an average of 1.73. The skewness (0.92) indicates a slight concentration towards dependence. The platykurtic (kurtosis = 0.86) states a flatter distribution with less clustering around the mean. Overall, the descriptive data imply that the majority of the young respondents have small families with a moderate dependency ratio.

**Table 2**

*Simple Percentage Analysis for Demographic Variables*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Category** | **No. Of. Respondents (128)** | **Per cent** |
| Area of Residence | Town | 37 | 28.91 |
| **Village** | **91** | **71.09** |
| Academic discipline | **Commerce** | **93** | **72.66** |
| Management | 10 | 7.81 |
| Computer Science | 11 | 8.59 |
| Chemistry | 3 | 2.34 |
| Physics | 6 | 4.69 |
| English | 5 | 3.91 |
| Academic level | **UG** | **81** | **63.28** |
| PG | 41 | 32.03 |
| M.Phil. | 2 | 1.56 |
| Ph.D. | 4 | 3.13 |
| Marital Status | Married | 6 | 4.69 |
| Unmarried | 122 | **95.31** |
| Type of family | Joint | 27 | 21.09 |
| **Nuclear** | **101** | **78.91** |
| Family income per month | **Up to Rs. 15000** | **47** | **36.72** |
| Rs.15,001 to Rs.30,000 | 42 | 32.81 |
| Rs.30,001 to Rs.50,000 | 20 | 15.63 |
| Above Rs.50,001 | 19 | 14.84 |
| Part-time job | **No** | **121** | **94.53** |
| Yes | 7 | 5.47 |
| Entry of Entrepreneurship | **No** | **81** | **63.28** |
| Yes | 47 | 36.72 |
| Awareness about government schemes | No | 59 | 46.09 |
| **Yes** | **69** | **53.91** |
| Business knowledge | **No** | **75** | **58.59** |
| Yes | 53 | 41.41 |
| College provides entrepreneurial training | **No** | **80** | **62.50** |
| Yes | 48 | 37.50 |

*(Note- Primary data)*

The simple percentage analysis revealed that the majority of the female students come from villages (71.09 %). Most of the students are from the commerce academic discipline (72.66%) and are undergraduates (63.28%). The majority of the students are unmarried (95.31 %). Most of the students come from nuclear families (78.91 %) with a family monthly income of up to Rs. 15000 (36.72 %).The maximum number of students are full-time students (94.53%) and apathetic (63.28%) towards entrepreneurship. The majority of the students feel that they have a lack of business knowledge (58.59%) and have an awareness (53.91%) towards government schemes. The majority of the students feel that the institutions didn’t provide entrepreneurial training (62.50 %) with academics.

**Contributors to planting an entrepreneurial thought in college students**

To identify the main contributor to inserting an entrepreneurial thought into female students, a simple percentage analysis was conducted.

**Table 3**

*Contributors for Sources of awareness about entrepreneurship*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources** | **No. Of. Respondents**  **(n=128)** | **Per cent** |
| Family | 21 | 16.41 |
| Friends | 33 | 25.78 |
| **Relatives** | **4** | **3.13** |
| School | 11 | 8.59 |
| **College** | **35** | **27.34** |
| Social media | 20 | 15.63 |
| **Government** | **4** | **3.13** |

*(Note- Primary data)*

Table 3 disclosed the contributors to gaining a piece of knowledge about entrepreneurial skills. The study revealed that the majority of the students gain entrepreneurial skills through college (27.34%), followed by friends (25.78%), family (16.41%), social media (15.63%), schools (8.59%), relatives (3.13%), and government (3.13%). The result specifies that the government is the least contributor to gaining knowledge about entrepreneurship. The government should conduct more campaigns in institutions to encourage women entrepreneurs in society.

**Investigation of the significant mean difference between demographic variables and awareness**

To analyse the mean difference between demographic variables and the awareness of students' entrepreneurial skills, an independent t-test and ANOVA were employed. The awareness index revealed that the majority of the students are moderately aware (70.3%) of entrepreneurial skills. The Levene test indicates that the assumption of homogeneity was not violated. The normality test is not necessary when sample sizes are above 30 respondents. The dependent variable, awareness, was on a continuous scale.

**Table 4**

*Demographic Variable with Awareness*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.No.** | **Independent**  **Variable** | **Dependent Variable** | | **T value/**  **F value** | **p value** | **Status** |
|  | **Independent t-test** | | | | | | |
| 1. | Area Of Residence | Awareness | | .400 | .920 | Not Significant |
| 2. | Marital Status | Awareness | | .553 | .581 | Not Significant |
| 3. | Type of family | Awareness | | 1.30 | .195 | Not Significant |
| 4. | **Part-time job** | **Awareness** | | **-2.275** | **.025\*** | **Significant** |
| 5. | Entry of Entrepreneurship | Awareness | | .679 | .498 | Not Significant |
|  | **Anova** | | | | | | |
| 6. | Age | Awareness | | 2.234 | .111 | Not Significant |
| 7. | **Academic discipline** | **Awareness** | | **2.417** | **.04\*** | **Significant** |
| 8. | **Academic level** | **Awareness** | | **4.310** | **.006\*\*** | **Significant** |
| 9. | Earning members | Awareness | | .777 | .542 | Not Significant |
| 10. | Non-Earning members | Awareness | | .127 | .881 | Not Significant |
| 11. | Family income | Awareness | | 1.847 | .142 | Not Significant |
| \*5% Significant | | | \*\*1% Significant | | | | |

*(Note- Primary data)*

**Independent t-test**

To analyse the mean difference between awareness and the two groups' demographic variables, an independent t-test was employed.

* **Area of Residence -** Table 3 discloses that area of residence t (126) =.40, p = .968 showed no significant effect on the awareness, despite the town students (*M* = 76.14, *SD* = 10.63) having more awareness than the village students (M = 76.06, SD = 10.00).
* **Marital Status -** There was no significant effect of marital status on awareness, t (126) = .553, p = .581, despite unmarried students (M = 76.19, SD = 10.34) having higher awareness than married students (*M* = 73.83, *SD* = 4.44).
* **Type of family** – Family type is insignificant,t (126) =1.30, p = .195, with awareness. A student who lives with a joint family (*M* = 78.33, *SD* = 9.35) attains a higher awareness than a nuclear family (M = 75.48, SD = 10.31).
* **Entry of Entrepreneurship** - There was no significant effect of aspiration to become an entrepreneur t (126) =.679, p =.498, despite being willing to enter business students (*M* = 76.54, *SD* = 10.36), conquering more awareness than others (M = 75.28, SD = 9.84).
* **Part-time job** - There was a significant effect for part-time job, **t (126) =-2.275, p =.025**. Part-time jobbers (M = 84.43, SD = 13.13) attaining higher scores than non-workers (*M* = 75.6, *SD* = 9.80)

**ANOVA**

To analyse the mean difference between awareness and three or more groups of demographic variables, an ANOVA test was deployed.

* **Age -** There was no significant effect of age on awarenessF (2,125) = 2.234 p = .111, despite the students aged above 24 years (*M* = 78.33, *SD* = 9.94) have a higher awareness than up to 18 years (M = 72.94, SD = 9.48) and 18 to 23 years old student (M = 77.05, SD = 10.27).
* **Family income** - Family income F (3,124) = 1.847, p = .142. There was no significant effect for income, despite those whose income was above Rs. 50,001 (*M* = 80.16, *SD* = 10.45) attaining higher scores than the Rs. 30,001 to Rs. 50,000 (M = 77.50, SD = 10.69), Rs.15,001 to Rs.30,000 (M = 75.77, SD = 9.89), and up to 15,000 (M = 73.90, SD = 10.76).
* **Earning capacity** - Earning members F (2,125) = .777, p = .542, and non-earning members F (2,125) = .127, p = .881 have an insignificant mean difference on awareness. A family with five earning members (*M* = 84.67, *SD* = 2.12) have more awareness than the others. A student who lives with one non-earner (*M* = 76.34, *SD* = 10.37) have a higher score than the students who live with two or more non-earners in the family. The awareness index shows a positive increase when the number of non-earning members in the family decreases, as well as the awareness index shows negative growth when the number of earning members decreases. It disclosed that the economic dependency negatively influences the awareness towards entrepreneurial skills. It is suggested that the fewer income may limit the exposure of students.
* **Academic discipline and level** - There was a significant effect for academic discipline and **F (5,122) = 2.417, p = .040**, and academic level **F (3,123) = 4.310, p = .006**. The management stream students (*M* = 87.67, *SD* = 16.34) have more awareness than others. By analysing academic level, post graduates (*M* = 80.27, *SD* = 8.9) have higher awareness than the M.Phil. students (M = 79.5, SD = .7), Ph.D. students (M = 79.25, SD = 10.05), and undergraduates (M = 73.72, SD = 10.11).

**Post hoc Analysis**

The post hoc analysis (Tukey HSD) employed the three or more group variables that have a significant association with awareness. The academic discipline and academic level variables were taken for pairwise comparisons.

**Table 5**

*Post Hoc Analysis (Tukey HSD)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Group (I)** | **Group (J)** | **Mean Difference (I-J)** | **Sig.** | **Status** |
| Academic discipline | Management | English | 21.66667 | .028\* | Significant |
| Commerce | Physics | 12.043 | .05 | Borderline |
| Academic level | PG | UG | 6.55224 | .004\*\* | Significant |
| \*\*Significant at 1% | | | \*Significant at 5% | | |

*(Note- Primary data)*

A post-hoc test was conducted to determine the nature of the detected outcome through Tukey pairwise comparisons. In the academic discipline, management was compared to English (MD = 21.67). The management stream students have more awareness of the entrepreneurial skill compared to English students, significantly **(p = .028).** Commerce students have more awareness than physics stream students (MD = 12.04) with borderline significance **(p =.05)**. In grade-wise academic level, postgraduate students have more awareness than undergraduates (MD = 6.55) in entrepreneurial skills significantly **(p = .004)**.

**VII. Suggestions and Recommendations**

The study gives the following suggestions to the government and institutions to promote entrepreneurial skills among women students:

* The simple percentage analysis revealed that the majority of the female students know the government schemes related to entrepreneurship, whereas a remarkable percentage of the students are unaware of government schemes. The government of India implemented a lot of schemes to empower women entrepreneurs in society. So, the government may conduct an awareness program in every college once a year.
* The Tamil Nadu government implemented a scheme, “Naan Mudhalvan.” Which aims to provide a skill for employment. The researcher suggested that promoting entrepreneurial skills and internships through this scheme will benefit the students.
* The simple percentage analysis revealed that the majority of the students feel that the college didn’t provide entrepreneurial training. This suggests that the institutions may offer more courses, seminars, and guest lectures to develop entrepreneurial skills.
* Post hoc analysis revealed that postgraduate and management students are more aware of entrepreneurship than undergraduates and other disciplines, respectively. This indicates that specifications may be introduced in the undergraduate subject and additional entrepreneurial courses for all disciplines. The institutions may mandate at least one practical entrepreneurial skill course for all students, irrespective of discipline.

**VIII. Conclusion**

Entrepreneurship is the backbone of Indian industry evolution, providing employment and economic growth. The current study revealed that the majority of the female students are moderately aware of entrepreneurial skills such as interpersonal skills, risk-taking, creativity, leadership, problem-solving, financial literacy, and decision-making. The institutions should provide new courses to empower their entrepreneurial skills, irrespective of their disciplines. The state government may introduce new courses as a part of the Naan Mudhalvan scheme to empower youths. The study proposed to evaluate the effectiveness of government initiatives to empower women entrepreneurs. If the recommended extents have been considered by the government and institutions, the female students will certainly shine and bring brilliance as women entrepreneurs.

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