A Study on Women Students' Interest in Starting Entrepreneurial Ventures with Special Reference to South Chennai

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Abstract*—Women's entrepreneurship serves as a vital catalyst for employment generation, economic participation and individual empowerment, with higher education institutions playing an instrumental role in nurturing students' entrepreneurial readiness. Adopting a descriptive and analytical research design, this study examines women college students' interest in starting entrepreneurial ventures in South Chennai using a clearly labelled hypothetical dataset of 150 respondents across Arts and Humanities, Commerce and Management, and Science/Technology disciplines. Data analysis employs percentage analysis, Pearson's Chi-square test of independence, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with Tukey's HSD post-hoc comparisons, and mean-rank prioritization. Results indicate that 47.33% of respondents are either interested (36.00%) or highly interested (11.33%) in starting an entrepreneurial venture, while 36.00% remain undecided. A statistically significant association exists between family business background and entrepreneurial interest ($\chi^2 = 19.12$, df = 1, $p < 0.001$), with 75.00% of students from business families expressing interest compared to 35.85% without such exposure. One-way ANOVA reveals significant differences in mean entrepreneurial-interest scores across academic disciplines ($F(2, 147) = 14.56$, $p < 0.001$), with Commerce and Management students scoring highest ($M = 17.81$, $SD = 3.46$). Financial independence (mean rank = 1.99) and passion/personal interest (mean rank = 2.67) emerge as the top motivating factors, whereas lack of startup capital (30.67%) and fear of failure (30.00%) constitute the primary barriers.

***Index Terms*—Women students, entrepreneurial intention, women entrepreneurship, higher education, entrepreneurial education, South Chennai**

I. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurship is the process of identifying opportunities, mobilising resources and accepting calculated risks to establish and grow a business venture. Alongside traditional salaried employment, entrepreneurship provides young women with an avenue for financial independence, leadership and active economic participation. Higher education represents a formative stage during which exposure to entrepreneurship curricula, role models, practical projects, incubation facilities and seed finance can convert latent curiosity into actionable business plans. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), entrepreneurial intention is shaped by personal attitudes towards venture creation, perceived social norms and perceived behavioural control.

Despite supportive national and state initiatives, the transition from entrepreneurial interest to actual venture launch among women students is frequently impeded by inadequate startup capital, limited procedural familiarity, fear of financial risk and family or mobility constraints. In the South Chennai collegiate context, empirical evidence is required to determine the extent of women students' entrepreneurial interest, whether

it varies across academic streams or family business exposure, and which motivational drivers and institutional support mechanisms are most critical.

II. Objectives and Hypotheses of the Study

- To examine the level of interest among women students in South Chennai in starting entrepreneurial ventures.
- To identify and rank the major factors motivating women students to consider entrepreneurship as a career option.
- To analyse the association between family business background and entrepreneurial interest (H01: There is no significant association between family business background and entrepreneurial interest).
- To test whether mean entrepreneurial-interest scores differ significantly across educational disciplines (H02: There is no significant difference in mean entrepreneurial-interest scores among women students belonging to different educational disciplines).
- To identify perceived barriers and institutional support needs, and offer practical recommendations for colleges.

III. Review of Literature & Research Gap

Empirical studies in Indian higher education highlight the interplay between personal attitudes, educational exposure and ecosystem support in shaping women students' entrepreneurial intentions. A multi-method study of Indian undergraduate women across science, commerce, arts and management programmes reported that social valuation and entrepreneurship education are key antecedents of entrepreneurial intention (Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, 2017). Anwar et al. (2020) demonstrated that entrepreneurial education positively moderates the relationship between attitudes, self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention among female university students. Similarly, Kovid (2025) examined 176 female students in Indian universities using the Theory of Planned Behaviour and confirmed significant effects for attitude, social norms, entrepreneurial education and perceived opportunities, while Karunambika and Arthi (2025) established that campus incubation activities foster female students' venture readiness.

Furthermore, Sharma, Khandelwal and Mehta (2025) underscored the relevance of innovativeness, self-concept, need for achievement and structured entrepreneurship courses in developing student competencies, whereas NITI Aayog (2022) emphasized improving awareness, procedural accessibility and capacity-building across government support schemes for women entrepreneurs. Addressing a localized research gap, this study evaluates cross-disciplinary differences, family business exposure and ranked motivators specifically among women students in South Chennai.

While existing literature has widely examined women's entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurship education across broader Indian university contexts, empirical research evaluating cross-disciplinary interest variations, family business exposure, and ranked motivational drivers specifically among women college students in South Chennai remains limited. The present study addresses this geographic and analytical gap by examining these dimensions across a sample of 150 respondents.

IV. Research Methodology

Particulars	Description
Research Design & Area	Descriptive and analytical research design; selected arts, science, commerce and management colleges in South Chennai, Tamil Nadu
Population & Sample	Women students in UG/PG programmes; N = 150 respondents (Hypothetical / Illustrative Dataset: IDs SCW-001 to SCW-150; stratified across 3 streams)
Instrument	Structured questionnaire: demographics, 5-point entrepreneurial interest scale (composite score: 5–25), 8 ranked motivators (1 = highest), barriers & support needs
Statistical Tools	Frequency and percentage analysis, Pearson's Chi-square test, one-way ANOVA with Tukey's HSD post-hoc test, and mean-rank prioritization ($\alpha = 0.05$)

V. Data Analysis and Interpretation (Hypothetical Dataset, N = 150)

5.1 Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–19 years / 20–21 years / 22 years and above	68 / 58 / 24	45.33 / 38.67 / 16.00
Course / Discipline	Commerce & Management / Science & Tech. / Arts & Humanities	64 / 46 / 40	42.67 / 30.67 / 26.67
Year of Study	I Year / II Year / III Year & PG	46 / 59 / 45	30.67 / 39.33 / 30.00
Family Business Background	Yes / No	44 / 106	29.33 / 70.67

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: The sample is predominantly undergraduate, led by the 18–19 years cohort (45.33%, n = 68), Commerce and Management students (42.67%, n = 64), and II Year students (39.33%, n = 59). Nearly three-tenths (29.33%, n = 44) report a family business background, whereas 70.67% (n = 106) come from non-business households.

5.2 Level of interest in starting an entrepreneurial venture

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly interested	17	11.33
Interested	54	36.00
Undecided	54	36.00
Not interested	22	14.67
Highly not interested	3	2.00

Total valid responses (Composite Score: M = 16.24, SD = 3.87)	**150**	**100.00**

Interpretation: A combined 47.33% (n = 71) express positive entrepreneurial inclination (11.33% highly interested; 36.00% interested), while 36.00% (n = 54) remain undecided—representing a key persuadable segment—and 16.67% (n = 25) are uninterested.

Source: Calculated data

5.3 Chi-square test: Family business background vs. entrepreneurial interest (H01)

Family Business Background	Interested (Highly + Interested)	Not Interested / Undecided	Total
Yes	33 (75.00%)	11 (25.00%)	44 (100.00%)
No	38 (35.85%)	68 (64.15%)	106 (100.00%)
Total	**71 (47.33%)**	**79 (52.67%)**	**150 (100.00%)**

Statistical Decision & Interpretation: χ^2 calculated = 19.12, df = 1, p = 0.000012 (p < 0.001), α = 0.05, minimum expected cell count = 20.83 → Reject H01. There is a highly significant association between family business background and entrepreneurial interest: 75.00% of students from business families express interest compared to 35.85% without family business exposure.

Source: Calculated data

5.4 One-way ANOVA: Entrepreneurial-interest score across disciplines (H02)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between groups	369.07	2	184.54	14.56	< 0.001 (0.000002)
Within groups	1863.30	147	12.68	—	—
Total	**2232.37**	**149**	**—**	**—**	**Decision: Reject H02**

Interpretation & Tukey HSD Post-Hoc: Mean interest scores differ significantly across disciplines (F(2, 147) = 14.56, p < 0.001), rejecting H02. Tukey's HSD confirms all pairwise differences are statistically significant (α = 0.05): Commerce and Management (n = 64, M = 17.81, SD = 3.46) scores higher than Science/Technology/Other (n = 46, M = 16.09, SD = 3.82; p = 0.035) and Arts and Humanities (n = 40, M = 13.95, SD = 3.41; p < 0.001), while Science/Technology also exceeds Arts and Humanities (p = 0.017).

Source: Calculated data

5.5 Ranking of motivating factors (1 = Most Important to 8 = Least Important)

Motivating Factor	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Total Score	Mean Rank	Final Rank
Financial independence	64	50	18	299	1.99	**1**
Passion / personal interest	50	36	21	400	2.67	**2**
Self-employment / career opportunity	21	28	40	498	3.32	**3**

Innovation / identifying a market opportunity	10	20	27	614	4.09	**4**
Flexible working arrangements	1	8	23	768	5.12	**5**
Family encouragement	3	5	11	842	5.61	**6**
Social recognition	1	2	7	937	6.25	**7**
Government / institutional support	0	1	3	1042	6.95	**8**

Interpretation & Barriers: Financial independence (mean rank = 1.99) and passion/personal interest (mean rank = 2.67) rank first and second, whereas government/institutional support ranks eighth (6.95), functioning as an enabler rather than a primary trigger. Among barriers, lack of startup capital (30.67%, n = 46), fear of failure (30.00%, n = 45) and limited procedural knowledge (21.33%, n = 32) dominate, while seed-funding/scheme guidance (36.00%) and hands-on business-plan mentoring (27.33%) are the top requested institutional supports.

Source: Calculated data

VI. Suggestions, Conclusion and Limitations

Suggestions: Colleges in South Chennai should: (1) embed applied business-model and ideation modules across Arts and Science programmes to close disciplinary gaps; (2) activate women-focused Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs) to mentor the 36.00% undecided student cohort; (3) conduct practical workshops on costing, pricing, digital marketing, GST and MSME registration; (4) connect non-business-family students (70.67%) with women founders and alumnae mentors; (5) host awareness clinics on MUDRA, Stand-Up India, StartupTN seed grants and Tamil Nadu NEEDS; and (6) organise low-risk campus pilot marketplaces while tracking actual venture registrations.

Conclusion & Limitations: Women students in South Chennai demonstrate strong entrepreneurial potential driven by aspirations for financial independence and personal passion. Because interest varies significantly with family business exposure and academic discipline, targeted institutional mentoring, seed-finance guidance and cross-disciplinary incubation are vital to translate student interest into sustainable ventures. Key limitations include reliance on a clearly labelled hypothetical dataset (N = 150) awaiting primary field replacement, confinement to South Chennai colleges, and cross-sectional self-report constraints.

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