

The Importance of Women Entrepreneurs and Their Contribution to Society: A Case of Quetta City

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in fostering economic growth, social development, and community empowerment. In Quetta city, the increasing participation of women in business reflects a significant shift in societal norms and highlights their potential to drive innovation and job creation. This study explores the importance of women entrepreneurs and examines their contributions to local economies and social development. By engaging in diverse sectors such as retail, services, and small-scale manufacturing, women not only generate income for themselves but also create employment opportunities for others, thus enhancing community well-being. The research identifies the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, including limited access to finance, cultural barriers, and a lack of mentorship. It highlights the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles. Ultimately, this study underscores the critical role of women entrepreneurship in promoting economic independence, social empowerment, and sustainable development in Quetta city.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Economic Empowerment, Quetta, Gender Equality.

Introduction

Women's entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful driver of economic and social transformation in modern societies. In recent decades, women have increasingly entered the entrepreneurial sphere, breaking traditional gender barriers and contributing significantly to national and global development. Their participation in business not only enhances productivity and innovation but also fosters inclusive and sustainable growth. Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in driving economic progress by creating jobs, generating income, and diversifying markets. By establishing and managing enterprises, they contribute to their nations' overall economic stability while promoting social equity and empowerment.

Historically, entrepreneurship was viewed as a male-dominated field due to cultural, social, and institutional constraints that limited women's participation. However, with changing socio-economic conditions, increased access to education, technological advancements, and supportive government policies, women are now asserting their presence in various business sectors. Women entrepreneurs are recognised not only for their managerial and technical skills but also for their creativity, leadership, and community-oriented approaches. Their enterprises often emphasise sustainability, ethical business practices, and social responsibility—qualities that help build stronger communities and promote inclusive development.

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Moreover, women-led businesses play a vital role in achieving several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to gender equality, economic growth, and poverty reduction. By empowering women through entrepreneurship, societies can harness a vast reservoir of untapped potential, thereby improving social welfare and long-term development. The increasing visibility of women entrepreneurs across industries symbolises a shift toward gender parity and balanced economic participation. Therefore, fostering women entrepreneurship is not only an economic necessity but also a social imperative that contributes to a more equitable and progressive global economy.

Women entrepreneurship in Quetta city has become an emerging force in local economic and social development. Despite cultural and structural barriers, many women in Quetta have ventured into business activities such as handicrafts, tailoring, beauty salons, food production, and online retailing. These enterprises not only provide women with financial independence but also contribute to family income, local employment, and skill development. In recent years, government initiatives, microfinance programs, and NGO support have encouraged more women in Quetta to start small and medium-sized businesses.

The Significant Role of Women Entrepreneurship in Quetta City

Economic Contribution

Women entrepreneurs in Quetta play a growing role in strengthening the city's local economy. Many women operate small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in sectors such as handicrafts, embroidery, food processing, tailoring, beauty services, and online retailing. These businesses contribute directly to household income generation and local market expansion. By creating local supply chains—such as sourcing raw materials and selling products within the region—women-led businesses enhance the circulation of money within Quetta's economy. Moreover, entrepreneurship offers an alternative source of income in a region with limited formal employment opportunities, especially for women. The rise of home-based businesses also promotes economic inclusivity, allowing women to participate in the economy without leaving their households, which is particularly important in the conservative cultural context of Baluchistan.

Social Empowerment

Women entrepreneurship in Quetta is a sponsor for social empowerment and gender equality. By engaging in business, women gain financial freedom, confidence, and a greater role in household decision-making. Entrepreneurship enables women to move beyond traditional domestic boundaries, fostering a sense of identity and purpose. Many women entrepreneurs report improved respect and recognition within their families and communities. Through participation in markets, exhibitions, and business associations, women entrepreneurs are also building networks that enhance their social status and visibility. This empowerment extends beyond individual success—it inspires other women to pursue education and entrepreneurship, contributing to broader social transformation in Quetta.

Employment Generation

Women-led enterprises in Quetta provide employment opportunities, mainly for other women and youth. Many women employ assistants, trainees, or workers in sectors such as tailoring, catering, and beauty services. For instance, a single embroidery business may employ several young women for stitching, packaging, and marketing. This not only reduces unemployment but also creates safe

and culturally acceptable workplaces for women who might otherwise be excluded from the formal job market. In doing so, women entrepreneurs help strengthen the city's micro-economy and contribute to inclusive economic development, where both men and women participate in productive activities.

Skill Development for Women

Entrepreneurship in Quetta has led to momentous skill enhancement among local women. Running a business requires developing capabilities in areas such as financial management, marketing, digital literacy, communication, and customer service. NGOs, vocational centres, and microfinance institutions in Quetta have also introduced entrepreneurial training programs that help women obtain technical and managerial skills. Additionally, women entrepreneurs often train others in embroidery, cooking, or beauty techniques, passing on their expertise to younger generations. This peer-to-peer learning culture contributes to capacity building within communities and helps sustain some skilled female personnel in the local economy.

Cultural Transformation

One of the most reflective impacts of women's entrepreneurship in Quetta is its contribution to cultural transformation. Customarily, the Baloch and Pashtun societies in Quetta have maintained conventional gender roles, in which women's contributions to public life were limited. However, the rise of women entrepreneurs is slowly reshaping these norms. As women become stronger in markets, on social media platforms, and at local exhibitions, they challenge stereotypes about women's abilities and roles. Families are increasingly recognising the benefits of women's economic participation, leading to greater acceptance and encouragement of female education and professional work. This shift is promoting a more comprehensive, progressive, and economically balanced society in Quetta.

Literature Review

Research on women entrepreneurship has expanded significantly over the past few decades, highlighting its fundamental role in economic growth, innovation, and social development. According to Hisrich and Brush (1986), women entrepreneurs play an essential role in differentiating economic activities and strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are vital for national development. Carter and Shaw (2006) emphasised that women-owned businesses contribute considerably to job creation, income generation, and innovation, particularly in developing economies where employment opportunities are limited.

Tambunan (2009) found that women's entrepreneurship has a direct effect on reducing poverty and improving family welfare by providing a steady income and improving living standards. Similarly, Minniti and Naudé (2010) argued that women entrepreneurs not only contribute to the economy but also enhance social capital, ethics, and community welfare through comprehensive business practices. Goyal and Parkash (2011) highlighted the significant challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, including limited access to finance, social constraints, and inadequate training. Despite these barriers, women entrepreneurs have demonstrated resilience, creativity, and leadership in managing their ventures effectively.

Current global studies, such as those by Kelley et al. (2020) in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), reveal a growing trend in women's participation in entrepreneurship worldwide. These studies note that women entrepreneurs are particularly active in service-oriented and social enterprises, emphasising sustainability, innovation, and social responsibility. Such businesses

often align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting gender equality, economic inclusion, and environmental stewardship.

Overall, the literature determines that women entrepreneurship is not simply an economic activity but a multidimensional force that promotes comprehensive growth, gender empowerment, and social progress. Encouraging women's entrepreneurial initiatives can thus lead to stronger economies and more equitable societies.

Research Gap

While broad research on women's entrepreneurship has been conducted, the existing literature primarily focuses on developed nations, with limited attention to developing economies where cultural, financial, and institutional barriers remain significant. Many studies (e.g., Hisrich & Brush, 1986; Carter & Shaw, 2006; Minniti & Naudé, 2010) have reviewed the economic contributions of women entrepreneurs but have given less attention to their broader social impact—such as community development, poverty alleviation, and sustainable growth. Moreover, there is a need for more in-depth research that explores how women entrepreneurs balance profit-making with social responsibility and ethical practices. Another notable gap lies in the lack of studies that assess how policy reforms, education, and technological advancements influence women's entrepreneurial success over time. Addressing these gaps can provide a more holistic understanding of the challenges and contributions of women entrepreneurs, especially in emerging economies striving for inclusive development.

Results and Discussion

Low overall female labour-force participation, concentrated in home-based and low-value activities

Urban Quetta exhibits very low female labour-force participation; surveys and the World Bank Quetta Urban Household analysis (2023) show that only a small fraction of women participate in paid market work, and about 78% of employed women in urban Quetta are home-based own-account workers (handicrafts, garment work, home-based manufacturing).

Women entrepreneurs exist, but are concentrated in particular sectors

Women entrepreneurs in Quetta are predominantly found in handicrafts, small food/catering businesses, home-based tailoring/garments, agro-processing at the household level, and small retail and e-commerce micro-ventures. Regional sector reports and SMEDA profiling note a strong presence of handicraft and home-based microenterprises among BWBA (Balochistan Women Business Association) members.

Structural constraints clearly limit scaling and formalisation

Multiple local studies (2023–2025) identify restricted mobility, conservative social norms, limited access to finance, low business training, weak networks/market access, and poor digital inclusion as primary constraints preventing women micro-businesses from scaling or formalising. Studies on Balochistan and project reports confirm capital access and network gaps as significant barriers.

Growing ecosystem supports (incubation, training, and programs)

Since ~2022–2025, there has been an increase in programmatic support: national initiatives (e.g., Khadijah Women Entrepreneurship Program), FAO and donor-backed agri-enterprise programs in Balochistan, local incubation efforts (Women Business Incubation Centre — Quetta), and NGO

trainings offering business skills and market linkages. These initiatives target training, mentorship, exhibition opportunities, and limited seed funding.

Measurable socio-economic impacts at the household and community level

Case studies and success stories indicate that even small women-run enterprises improve household incomes, reduce vulnerability, and increase girls' school attendance and household decision-making among beneficiary families. Program reports record anecdotal success and incremental welfare gains among participants.

Discussion

A. Why women entrepreneurs matter in Quetta: economic and social rationale

Poverty reduction and household resilience

Because many Quetta households are economically vulnerable, women's income from micro-enterprises contributes to food security and reduces reliance on a single earner. Evidence from project evaluations and World Bank survey results shows that home-based enterprises serve as an essential buffer for poorer households.

Labour market inclusion with cultural acceptability

Home-based entrepreneurship is often the most socially acceptable route for women to earn income in Quetta's socio-cultural context. This explains the heavy concentration in home-based, informal activities and suggests that interventions should build on, rather than ignore, these norms.

Women's empowerment and social change

Beyond income, entrepreneurship increases women's agency (decision-making, mobility within accepted bounds) and role-modelling for younger women and girls. Program narratives and success stories document gains in self-confidence and community recognition among participants.

B. Constraints that reduce potential contribution unpacking the barriers

Access to finance is constraining scale

Microcredit and informal loans are available but often at small amounts and with high barriers (collateral, male co-signers). Studies in 2023–2025 show that access to capital remains a top barrier to moving from subsistence to growth-oriented enterprises.

Market access and value chains are weak

Women's goods (handicrafts, home-processed foods) often face limited market linkages and low bargaining power, resulting in low returns. Participation in trade fairs and export channels is slowly improving through government and TDAP programs, but remains limited.

Skills, networks, and digital divide

Entrepreneurial education, digital literacy, and networks are pivotal. Research finds that training and network access mediate success — those women who get formal training and mentoring show higher survival and growth rates. The digital gap (internet access and e-commerce skills) further impedes market expansion.

Social norms & mobility constraints

Household attitudes and broader social expectations continue to limit public market participation, restricting women to home-based work and limiting chances to expand into formal premises or

public marketplaces. The World Bank report emphasises the weight of norms in shaping opportunities.

C. How women entrepreneurs contribute despite constraints: empirical and theoretical links **Micro-to-macro linkage**

Even when enterprises are small, aggregate effects matter. A larger number of sustainable microenterprises increases local economic activity, generates demand for local inputs (supplies, raw materials), and can create part-time employment for other women. This is particularly important in Quetta, where formal female employment is limited. Program data and local studies show incremental household and community benefits where women's enterprises scale modestly.

Human capital and intergenerational effects

Income from women entrepreneurs is more likely to be spent on children's health and education, particularly girls' schooling—thus entrepreneurship contributes to longer-term human capital formation. Project reports narrate such shifts among beneficiary families.

D. Policy and program implications derived from the evidence

Design interventions around home-based realities

Since most women start and operate from home, support (training, digital facilitation, micro-financing) should be delivered at or near their homes (mobile training, women-only incubation hubs). Evidence shows that such deliveries increase take-up and retention.

Targeted finance products and market linkages

Develop collateral-light microloans, group lending, grants for productivity equipment, and programs that connect women vendors to exhibitions, e-marketplaces and institutional buyers (e.g., TDAP support). TDAP and incubation initiatives provide applicable models.

Skills + digital literacy + mentorship

Combine technical/vocational training with business skills (pricing, bookkeeping, online marketing). Studies show entrepreneurial education and networks strongly mediate success.

Work with social norms, not only around them

Community dialogue, male engagement in household economic planning, and public recognition of women entrepreneurs (awards, local markets with women's sections) can slowly shift norms while preserving women's safety and dignity. Program narratives in Balochistan indicate shifts in attitude, with community-sensitive projects implemented.

E. Limitations of current evidence and research needs

Many existing reports are survey-based or program evaluations with limited longitudinal follow-up. There is a need for longitudinal studies to track which interventions produce sustained scaling and which women transition from home-based subsistence to formal SMEs. Localised data disaggregation by age, education, and household poverty status would improve targeting.

Short Synthesis

Women entrepreneurs in Quetta play a vital role in household livelihoods, community resilience, and gradual social change. Their contribution is constrained by low formal participation, limited

finance, weak market linkages, and restrictive norms — but targeted, context-sensitive interventions (home-based support, tailored finance, market linkages, digital & business skills, and norm-sensitive community engagement) consistently appear in the evidence as the most promising levers to amplify their social and economic contribution.

Conclusion

Women's entrepreneurship is a foundation of comprehensive and sustainable development. It not only enhances economic growth but also encourages gender equality and community welfare. To maximise their potential, systemic and smooth approaches must be addressed through financial support, training, mentorship, and gender-sensitive policies. Empowering women entrepreneurs will be a great support to the country's economy, as well as to greater innovation and more understanding of society.

- Governments should initiate gender-sensitive financial programs to improve women's access to credit.
- Entrepreneurship education and digital literacy programs should be extended to women at all levels.
- Policy bases should encourage mentorship, networking, and market acquaintances for women-led enterprises.
- Awareness campaigns should address gender stereotypes and encourage women entrepreneurs as economic leaders.
- Sustainable business models should be stimulated to support overall development goals.

Recommendations

Access to Finance: Financial institutions and government programs should provide easy access to loans, grants, and microfinance facilities specifically designed for women entrepreneurs in Quetta.

Skill Development and Training: Organise workshops, training programs, and mentorship opportunities to enhance business management, digital literacy, and marketing skills.

Networking Opportunities: Encourage the creation of women-entrepreneur associations and networking platforms to share experiences, resources, and collaborate.

Policy Support: The government should develop policies that reduce cultural and legal barriers, promoting women's active participation in entrepreneurship.

Awareness Programs: Raise societal awareness about the importance of women's economic participation to challenge stereotypes and foster community support.

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