

Historical Perspectives on the Evolution of Gender Roles: Case Studies from Different Societies



Dr. Insha Goel Vats^{1*}

^{1*}Asst. Professor (Selection Grade), Law Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies-Technical Campus, Affiliated to GGSIPU, Email ID: insha.vats@vips.edu, Orcid ID: 0009-0004-1947-027X.

Abstract

In this paper, the way the gender role has changed and developed historically and how it has built and developed the nature of entrepreneurship and sustainable development, will be discussed in relation to India in particular. Gender is an outcome of a system of culture and institutionalization and a process of ongoing socialization, it is perceived as a social process and not a biological determinant. This paper explains the impact of these gendered expectations on access to resources, opportunities and economic activities. It underlines the structural constraints that women must grapple with in the long term like lack of access to finance, lack of mobility and demand on their part by society regarding their roles back home that limit their entrepreneurial abilities. The other key concepts that have been explored in the study are gender justice, masculinity, femininity and the dichotomous public-private and how these structures contribute or retard gender inequalities. The role of legal provisions and judicial interventions is discussed as a significant means of enhancing gender equality and inclusion to contribute to economies. Such issues as female foeticide, unequal distribution of the resources, symbolic manifestations of gender bias are also connected with in the paper, with the accent on their socio-economic implications on a larger scale. Integrating literature and up-to-date trends, such as online platforms and policy initiatives, the paper pinpoints the transformational aspect of inclusive entrepreneurship. It contends that gender inequalities need to be tackled to promote innovation, economic development and sustainability of developing economies.

Keywords: Gender Construction, Women Entrepreneurship, Gender Equality, Sustainable Development, Socio-cultural Barriers

1. Introduction

Gender is the socially constructed aspect of women and men such as norms, roles and relations within and among these groups. Gender, in contrast to biological sex, is dynamic and changes across societies and time. It involves relational, hierarchical, historical, contextual and institutional aspects that influence the way people engage in social and economic systems. Gender is a concept that cuts across other disciplines like sociology, law, politics and culture, but in addition, it intersects with other identity markers like class, ethnicity, age, and physical ability. These intersections affect access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making power in the society greatly (Panda, 2018).

Socio-culturally, gender is an outcome of the ongoing process of socialization. Gender roles and expectations are learnt within family structures, schooling, media portrayals and within the larger cultural discourses. These forces influence ideas of what is considered as masculine and feminine behavior which might have variation in terms of cultural and institutional setting. Although the gender norms have changed gradually with time, in many ways, they are based on heteronormative systems that presuppose binary identities and dictate the roles and behaviours of men and women. Those who do not conform to such norms regularly

face discrimination, marginalization, and a reduced access to socio-economic opportunities (Olawaju & Fernando, 2020).

Gender has always been studied according to social and cultural contexts, but its consequences go deep into the economic domain, specifically, in the sphere of entrepreneurship and sustainable development. In upcoming economies like India, the gender norms have a major impact on the involvement in economic activities, access to finance and the capability of undertaking entrepreneurial ventures. Structural and cultural barriers to women to entering business ecosystems, such as access to capital, limited mobility, and expectations of taking care of children and housework, are often limiting (Rashid and Ratten, 2020).

Entrepreneurship has come to be viewed as a vital source of sustainable development, inclusive growth, and economic resilience. In this context, female entrepreneurship is crucial in enhancing innovation, creation of employment and social change. Nonetheless, the deep-rooted gendered conventions and institutional prejudices still limit the full potential of the female entrepreneurship. An example is the stereotypes about risk-taking, leadership skills, and decision-making, which tend to make men more appropriate in the role of an entrepreneur, thus affecting investment behavior,

business relations, and market access (Barrachina-Fernández et al., 2021).

These problems are further compounded in the Indian context by some deeply rooted cultural and institutional frameworks. Despite the considerable gains achieved with the policy interventions, including the financial inclusion programs and the encouraged entrepreneurs by women, the gaps are still clear in the areas of labour force participation, business ownership, and access to formal credit system. The recent reports on women entrepreneurship across the world still present these inequalities and the necessity of specific interventions to enhance economic involvement (Elam et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, changing societal attitudes, technological changes, and the emergence of digital platforms are providing new opportunities to women entrepreneurs. There is more engagement of women in entrepreneurial activities, particularly small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMEs) due to digital financial services, social media, and e-commerce. These changes imply that the principles of gender norms keep playing a confining role, but these norms are dynamic and can be changed by specific interventions, education, and institutional backing (Vuciterna et al., 2024).

More recent academic syntheses also highlight the fact that socio-cultural norms, institutional constraints, and resource access are in a complicated interplay creating conditions under which women in developing economies can and do pursue the entrepreneurship, and that these factors interact to create conditions of entrepreneurial performance and sustainability capacity (Kamran et al., 2025).

This paper is based on the initial knowledge of gender as being a social construct to explore its implications on entrepreneurship and sustainable development in India. Specifically, it discusses how gender norms and cultural expectations as well as institutional frameworks play their part in the role of women in pursuing entrepreneurial activities and their contribution to a sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The next area of the new literature is the notion that female entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in achieving the bigger sustainability goal and eradicating socio-economic differences (Fernandez-Guadano et al., 2025).

In this manner, the paper will contribute to the broader debate regarding sustainable

entrepreneurship by showing the importance of gender inclusivity as an important factor that will shape the long-term development. It also highlights that policy modification; institutional processes of facilitation and cultural change is a necessity to build an enabling environment in which both genders can equally participate in economic activities. Recent studies also uphold the fact that adding sustainability perspectives to the entrepreneurship field may enhance the long-term economic and environmental performance (Sánchez-Limón et al., 2025).

In addition, developing conceptual frameworks indicate the increasing significance of making business decisions that are climate conscious and sustainability focused, thus connecting gender-inclusive entrepreneurship with the wider environmental and developmental agendas (Islam and Mehdi, 2024).

2. Social Construction Theories of Gender

It is explained that gender, based on the social constructivist theory, is not an objective reality but an artificial one that is a construction formed by the norms and performance of gender in the society. The popular illustration of how gender is socially constructed is in the belief that men are naturally strong and brave whereas women are seen as weak and scared. The word sex, on the other hand, is used to describe the biological variations among people, including physical structure and anatomy. This difference emphasizes that gender is not a biological, but a socially constructed phenomenon created in cultural and institutional practices (Henry et al., 2016).

Sexism is a notion that is applied to explain gender-based discrimination in any form. Social construction theory underlines that the way people define themselves as male or female is defined by cultural influences and not biological elements. Since early childhood, people are subjected to gender expectations, usually represented by the dichotomy of blue and pink. Family, educational systems, and media reinforce these initial differences and form perceptions about what defines gender roles (Jennings and Brush, 2013).

Social constructionism offers a bigger context on how knowledge and the reality are constructed within the context of social interactions. Table 1 enumerates the key theoretical approaches that associate gender and entrepreneurship.

Table 1. Theoretical frameworks explaining the relationship between gender and entrepreneurship

| Theory | Key Idea | Relevance to Entrepreneurship |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Social Construction Theory | Gender roles are socially constructed through cultural and institutional processes | Shapes entrepreneurial identities, roles, and opportunity access |
| Feminist Theory | Emphasizes gender inequality and power structures | Highlights structural and systemic barriers faced by women entrepreneurs |
| Institutional | Focuses on formal and informal rules | Explains how norms and policies influence |

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|---|
| Theory | | governing behavior | entrepreneurial ecosystems |
| Human Capital Theory | | Skills, education, and experience drive economic participation | Gender disparities in human capital affect entrepreneurial capacity |

In this paradigm, gender is considered to be fluid and contextualized, and not fixed or binary. The theory undermines the established male and female divisions by highlighting the fluid nature of identities and permeable nature of demarcations. These functions start at an early age during which family and school are the two major agents of socialization. To cite an example, the gendered behaviours are legitimized in educational settings, with various forms of differentiated play practices, including giving girls nurturing roles and boys construction-related tasks (Ahl and Marlow, 2021). These early social indicators affect the ability, interests, and career choices as children mature. To illustrate, boys who are encouraged to play in a spatial or technical manner can acquire skills that are related to such areas as engineering or entrepreneurship, whereas girls who are encouraged to play as caregivers can be pushed away of these areas. These are differences which have been created socially; thus, their impacts are long term on the involvement of economic activities, especially entrepreneurship. Gender norms, in turn, do not only determine identity, but also affect access to opportunities, risk-taking behavior, and decision-making abilities in business situations (Eddleston et al., 2016).

The fact that gender is a social construct also brings out its contribution to the perpetuation of power structures and inequalities. Gender roles are allocated in societies as much as other forms of categories like class, ethnicity and social status are allocated. This categorization tends to reinforce the control systems that restrain agency of individuals and promote injustice. Such norms may limit the role of women in entrepreneurial ecosystems, where they may affect the perceptions of leadership, credibility, and competence. Gender biases are deeply rooted, which often causes difficulties in accessing finance, networks, and market opportunities by women entrepreneurs (Brush et al., 2019).

Media has a very essential role of strengthening these norms. Advertising, television and the Internet tend to create stereotypical gender roles, i.e., male dominance and female dependency. These images affect the social norms and may determine the ambitions of entrepreneurs. An example is how women are portrayed as either supportive or passive figures, as opposed to being leaders or innovators, which could deter women who want to engage in entrepreneurial activities or as leaders. Meanwhile, the changing media discourses and online environments are already starting to dispel these stereotypes, and women start enjoying a new

chance to engage in entrepreneurship (Vuciterna et al., 2024).

Notably, gender social construction does not end at childhood, but its persistence goes on into the life of an individual. It determines the way individuals view themselves and they are judged by others. Gender is a kind of performance, which one constantly performs, and this performance is usually compared to the socially constructed standards. This may be in the form of expectation about the communication style, behavior of leadership, and tolerance of risk, in the context of entrepreneurial situations. Entrepreneurs of the female gender, in particular, might be subjected to extra criticism or pressure to meet the expectations of both traditional femininity and the new professional demands (Kamran et al., 2025).

In sustainability terms, it is imperative to have knowledge of social construction of gender to foster inclusive entrepreneurship. Individual potential is not only limited by gender-based barriers, but it decreases the efficiency of the economy in general and innovation. The comprehensive sustainability studies in other fields show that inclusive and context-specific solutions are crucial when it comes to tackling structural issues and enhancing the quality of development over time (Farhad et al., 2024).

Policymakers and institutions can create a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment, with more forms of participation, by alleviating these socially constructed constraints. In its turn, this helps in achieving larger objectives of sustainable development, such as poverty eradication, gender equality and economic development.

In sum, gender is not a natural phenomenon, but a socially constructed phenomenon that determines behavior, opportunities and structures of society. It has more than social identity effects that are seen in the economic sectors, especially in the field of entrepreneurship. It is important to acknowledge and remedy how gender expectations inform the choices of those who engage in entrepreneurship to create inclusive and sustainable economies, particularly in developing economies like India.

3. Gender Justice

Gender justice is the fair treatment of people of all genders in which there is an equal right, opportunity, and access to resources. Although gender justice is traditionally considered in the context of legal and human rights, it is also important in determining economic participation and entrepreneurial development. Gendered vulnerabilities in livelihoods and employment structures have also

been emphasized in the context of crises in emerging economies such as India, where the need to have inclusive and resilient economic systems has been highlighted (Agarwal, 2021).

Gender justice offers a basis to inclusive economic systems as people can make their own choice without being bound to the gender roles and stereotypes. Table 2 provides key legal and institutional frameworks to gender equality.

Table 2. Key Legal Frameworks Supporting Gender Equality in India

| Law / Policy | Year | Key Provision | Relevance to Entrepreneurship |
|---------------------------------------|------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Vishakha Guidelines | 1997 | Workplace safety | Enables women participation |
| Domestic Violence Act | 2005 | Protection from abuse | Improves economic independence |
| Sexual Harassment Act | 2013 | Safe workplace | Encourages workforce entry |
| MTP Act | 1971 | Reproductive rights | Enhances decision-making autonomy |
| Property Rights (Vineeta Sharma Case) | 2020 | Equal inheritance | Improves access to capital |

This would be translated into the equal access to business, financial services, and the market in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Nevertheless, structural disparities like disproportionate land redistribution and lack of ownership of productive resources still limit the level of entrepreneurial activities and economic autonomy of women (Brixiová et al., 2020).

One of the most intractable obstacles to gender justice is the social norms, especially in the developing economies. Such standards affect the female engagement in the labor market and restrict their opportunities to start up their own business, thus perpetuating economic inequalities (Jayachandran, 2020). Financial inclusion, in this case, stands out as an important empowerment tool, which empowers women to obtain credit, savings, and business opportunities that help to achieve long-term economic sustainability (Hendriks, 2019). On a more fundamental level, gender role expectations and gender identity, which is formed as a result of socialization processes, still affect personal aspirations and career choices, deterring the idea of women to take on the role of a leader and entrepreneur (Davis, 2002). Such socio-cultural relations intersect with legal and institutional frameworks, which regulate the rights of women and their economic contribution.

Legal provisions, including the Indian Penal Code, in India also serve to tackle the concept of bodily autonomy and protection, which are the principles of gender justice on a larger scale (Indian Penal Code, 1860). Additional laws like the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act reinforce the rights of women in reproduction and they have more control over their personal and economic choices (Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971).

The judicial interventions have also been transformative towards promoting gender justice. The issue of dignity and safety at the workplace has been seen as essential right in landmark verdicts,

thus enabling women to take part in formal working and entrepreneurship (Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan, 1997). Based on such case laws, legal frameworks have institutionalized safeguards against harassment at workplaces, thereby making the workplaces safer and more inclusive (Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013).

Legal actions, which deal with domestic violence also play a role in economic empowerment as they allow women to escape the abusive conditions that limit their movement, as well as involvement in economic pursuits (Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005). Likewise, the laws against exploitation and trafficking are designed to safeguard vulnerable groups and enable an environment where fair economic actors can perform (Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956).

Economic activities including dowry still have gender inequalities deep-rooted within them and in most cases end up imposing financial limitations on women and restricting them to access resources that are needed to be an entrepreneur and economically independent (Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961). In the international arena, the Charter of the European Union of the fundamental rights and equality, which underlines the international desire to achieve gender justice, is supported by frameworks like the European Union Charter (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012).

The comparative view of developed economies emphasizes the development of gender justice by the legislative interventions. As an example, anti-discrimination legislation has been very important in providing equality of opportunity in the employment and participation in the economy (Sex Discrimination Act 1975). On the same note, laws dealing with wage inequalities have been used to minimize the income gap and to enhance financial autonomy of women (Equal Pay Act 1970).

The wider legal framework on violence, protection, and equality has further instilled legal support on gender justice. Legislation that aims at victim protection, fostering equality and protecting individual rights help in the establishment of inclusive places to take part in economic and entrepreneurial practices (Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004). There has also been an act of comprehensive equality legislation whose aim was to eradicate discrimination in various fields, business participation and employment being one of them (Equality Act 2006).

The legislation on forced marriage and employment protection also strengthen the autonomy of individuals and security of their livelihood, empowering women to seek their own jobs and entrepreneurial activities (Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007). Equally, the employment protection systems provide equitable working conditions and job security which are crucial in long term economic engagement (Employment Protection Act 1975). The policy of policing reforms and laws on sexual offences also make the areas a safer place where women can freely move and engage in economic activities (Sexual Offences Act 2003). Enhanced policing structures also promote the application of such safeguards (Policing and Crime Act 2009). Also, laws on the ill practices like female genital mutilation are crucial in protecting health and dignity that is paramount in enabling long-term socio-economic empowerment (Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003).

Lastly, identification of gender identity under legal structures will promote the greater inclusiveness and equal roles in economic systems, going beyond the binary categories of gender justice (Gender Recognition Act 2004).

Finally, gender justice does not simply stop at legal equality but goes further to include the institutional, economic and social environments that are required to ensure inclusive entrepreneurship. The relations between the legal frameworks, social norms, and economic opportunities define the degree to which women could engage in and enjoy the entrepreneurial ecosystems. These dimensions need to be enhanced to promote sustainable and inclusive development.

4. Masculinity and Toxic Masculinity

Masculinity is a group of socially constructed roles, behaviours and expectations traditionally linked with men. All these are not universal expectations, but differ in cultural and institutional contexts. Masculinity has been changing over time in both historical and social aspects, mirroring the values and norms in society (Times of India Blog, 2023). Although this has evolved, still dominant masculinity forms tend to focus on the competitiveness, control and authority traits that

have a great impact on the identity of individual and the organization structure.

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that clarifies how some of the dominant male behaviours are institutionalized and normalized which in most cases propagate hierarchical gender relations in the society and the workplace (Hechavarría & Ingram, 2016). Such standards might influence the entrepreneurial ecosystems, favouring aggressive and risk-taking behaviours, often linked with male leadership styles. Consequently, the female business owners can experience implicit bias in the process of their abilities and leadership potential assessment.

Masculinity is an important factor in determining access to opportunities and resources in entrepreneurial situations. The studies of female entrepreneurs in third world economies underscore the fact that structural and cultural factors usually restrict their involvement in business matters especially in settings where the networks of men held the key to access to capital and markets (De Vita et al., 2014). Such barriers are also supported by gendered views of leadership whereby assertiveness among men is positive, whereas the same would be seen negatively in women.

Toxic masculinity is a manifestation of traditional masculine norms that is more radical and encompasses dominance, rejection of emotions, and aversion to collaboration. Such character traits may adversely affect the workplace culture by fostering the culture of competition instead of cooperation and inclusion. This can result in a lack of diversity and innovation in such an environment, which ultimately impacts the long-term performance and sustainability of the entrepreneurial ventures.

Economically, gender inequality in the context of entrepreneurial ecosystems has implications on larger growth and development processes. Researchers have demonstrated that the minimization of gender inequalities can result in better economic performance, implying that their inclusion is a social goal, as well as an economic requirement (Kabeer and Natali, 2013). Nonetheless, the gender norms still seem to inhibit the access of women to entrepreneurial opportunities, especially in underdeveloped economies.

Financial inclusion is a major factor towards dealing with these inequalities. Digital financial services and mobile money have been found to increase economic participation and alleviate poverty especially among women (Suri & Jack, 2016). Nevertheless, financial systems and investment networks are frequently gendered, which restricts the usefulness of these tools, and the more inclusive institutional structures are required.

Masculinity also has an implication to the general security, violence, and social stability. Gendered forms of power, supported by the dominant

masculine norms, may lead to the creation of environments that marginalize women and limit their involvement in economic and social activities (Tripp et al., 2013). These structural inequalities must be dealt with in order to establish inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Meanwhile, the changing attitude to gender roles has demonstrated the significance of various leadership approaches. Feminine qualities, empathy, cooperation and social consciousness, are becoming very much appreciated in the contemporary organizational setting (Aragon, 2004). Incorporating these attributes in the entrepreneurial leadership can lead to innovation, work dynamics, and sustainable business.

To sum up, masculinity (especially in its strict and exclusionary manifestations) remains an influential element in the process of shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystems, which perpetuate inequality and suppress diversity. Toxic masculinity is an obstacle to the involvement of women, has an impact on financing and leadership structures, and the possibility of inclusive development. To overcome these problems, there is a necessity to change the paradigm towards more inclusive cultural norms, fair institutional practices, and different models of leadership. These changes are necessary in the context of developing sustainable entrepreneurship and other development objectives.

5. Femininity

Femininity can be defined as those attributes, behaviours and roles that are traditionally attributed to women in the society. Similar to masculinity, femininity is not biologically determined, but is socially constructed and adjusted within the cultural, institutional and interpersonal relationships. These structures affect the way people see themselves and how they are judged in the social and professional contexts. Gendered behavior is highly contextualized, and people adjust their behavior depending on the expectations of the society and any given situation (Deaux and Major, 1987).

Femininity has been rather underestimated in terms of entrepreneurial activity where the traditionally masculine elements of competitiveness and assertiveness rule out. However, recent studies emphasize the fact that women entrepreneurs possess special strengths that can make a special contribution to business success and sustainability. As an example, women-owned businesses tend to focus on cooperation, business ethics and value creation in the long-term, which are crucial attributes of sustainable entrepreneurship (Berger and Kuckertz, 2016).

Emotional intelligence and relational leadership is one of the main contributions of femininity in entrepreneurship. Female entrepreneurs have

higher chances of pursuing inclusive leadership approaches that emphasize on communication, empathy, and team building. These attributes are becoming more and more important in the management of a diverse team and innovation in the contemporary business setting. This kind of leadership style may increase the organizational resilience and flexibility especially in the fast and unpredictable markets.

Although these are the strengths, the gendered perceptions still affect the evaluation of women entrepreneurs. Studies indicate that women tend to be discriminated against when it comes to accessing funds, as their abilities and potential to develop are put into more scrutiny as compared to that of their male counterparts. This indicates more general assumptions regarding the role of women and their abilities in leadership by society, which may restrict access to capital and business opportunities (Kanze et al., 2017).

A self-perception is also an important factor in entrepreneurial intentions. Women might underestimate their capabilities or be reluctant to become an entrepreneur by internalising gender norms and social expectations. Such perceptions may impact on decision making and career choices, which, in turn, can impact the participation in entrepreneurial ecosystems in general (Thébaud, 2010).

Meanwhile, femininity is getting considered as an asset in facilitating social and sustainable entrepreneurship. The women in business are more apt to venture in businesses that solve social problems, community and environmental sustainability. Their emphasis on social development and ethical business is also very similar to the objectives of sustainable development which underlines the role of gender diversity in entrepreneurship.

In a larger context, incorporating feminine leadership qualities within the entrepreneurial ecosystems can boost innovation and performance in the long-term. Companies that embrace cooperative and socially responsible practices are at a better position to react to thorny international issues. Nonetheless, this can only be done by ensuring that structural impediments and cultural prejudices that restrain appreciation and acceptance of various leadership styles are addressed.

Although the sustainability studies in other areas (environmental and agricultural studies) pay a lot of attention to the need of context-independent and multi-dimensional approaches to problem-solving, the same principles can be applied to the sphere of entrepreneurship. More holistic and sustainable outcomes can be achieved with the help of inclusive and diverse points of view, such as those related to femininity (Farhad et al., 2024).

To sum up, femininity does not present a weakness but is a strategic advantage in the contemporary entrepreneurial ecosystem. Focusing on cooperation, compassion, and practices that are sustainable in nature, feminine leadership helps build inclusive and robust business models. Nevertheless, gender prejudices and institutional restrictions should continue to be overcome to help empower the potential of women entrepreneurs to their full extent. It is important to promote the importance of femininity in entrepreneurship to have sustainable and inclusive economic development.

6. Features of Femininity

Femininity is defined as a collection of attributes, behaviours and roles which societies traditionally attribute to women. These traits are not predetermined but are determined by cultural, historical and social forces. The historical development of gender roles proves that femininity is dynamic and constantly redefined according to the new societal norms and expectations (The Metric). Consequently, femininity is situational and represents the larger trends in social organization and identity.

Femininity has been traditionally connected with such qualities like empathy, nurturing behavior, cooperation, and emotional sensitivity. Although they have been traditionally underestimated within the context of traditional economic and organizational environment, their importance in the context of leadership and entrepreneurship gains growing importance in modern perspective. The masculinity and femininity which used to be taken as fixed and dichotomous, are now understood as more dynamic and dependent on the circumstances, and people can demonstrate the mixture of qualities no matter what gender they are (Constantinople, 1973).

Sociologically, the construction of femininity is based on the prevailing types of masculinity, which tend to establish social hierarchies and power dynamics. Hegemonic masculinity is a notion that brings into focus how some masculine attributes are given preference over others thus creating the perception and appreciation of feminine attributes in the social and economic framework (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Such a dynamic of relationships often leads to the exclusion of feminine qualities in entrepreneurial and professional settings, where aggression and competitiveness are considered the main values.

Psychological theories further elaborate how femininity is learned in the processes of self-socialization and internalization of societal norms. People actively build their gender identities through decoding the social messages and modifying their behaviors to fit into their desired expectations. The process not only affects personal identity, but also

career selection, leadership approach, and involvement in entrepreneurial ventures (Tobin et al., 2010). Consequently, women might be motivated towards those jobs that focus on care and collaboration that might influence their business and management styles.

Femininity in the entrepreneurship context adds to unique leadership and organizational practices. Women entrepreneurs tend to show relational leadership styles, which are more based on teamwork, communication and involvement of stakeholders. These strategies can strengthen the unity of the team, decision-making, and innovation. In addition, gender attributes like empathy and social consciousness are especially useful in businesses that aim at community development, social impact and sustainability.

The increasing focus on sustainable development has also increased the value of feminine leadership traits. The need to balance both the economic objectives and social and environmental issues is inherent to sustainable entrepreneurship, which is very similar to the values conventionally linked to femininity. Women run businesses have a tendency to follow ethical business practices, focus more on long term results and solve societal problems hence; resulting in inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

These strengths notwithstanding, femininity remains underestimated in most entrepreneurial ecosystems because of the existing gender biases and stereotypes. Women entrepreneurs might experience difficulty in recognition, financing as well as credibility, especially in sectors dominated by men. These obstacles are indicative of more widespread social beliefs that equate leadership and success with masculine characteristics.

Nevertheless, the value of femininity in the workplace is slowly redefining due to the changing cultural and institutional attitudes. New possibilities in women entrepreneurship are being opened by growing awareness of the diversity of leadership styles and the need to be inclusive. Combining feminine and masculine qualities, people and companies can become more balanced and adaptive to leadership.

To sum up, femininity is an artificial and developing social construct that has a major influence in determining the entrepreneurial conduct and the organizational practices. Its focus on cooperation, understanding, and sustainability provides beneficial insights to contemporary business. It is vital to highlight and advance the strengths related to femininity to create an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem and long-term sustainable development.

7. Case Laws and Institutional Support for Gender Equality

Femininity is defined as a collection of attributes, behaviours and roles which societies traditionally attribute to women. These traits are not predetermined but are determined by cultural, historical and social forces. The historical development of gender roles proves that femininity is dynamic and constantly redefined according to the new societal norms and expectations (The Metric). Consequently, femininity is situational and represents the larger trends in social organization and identity.

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Despite these strengths, femininity is still under-represented in most entrepreneurial ecosystems due to the existing gender bias and stereotypes. Women entrepreneurs may find it challenging to be recognized, financed and credible particularly in male dominated industries. These barriers are a pointer of more prevalent social attitudes that equate leadership and success to masculine traits.

However, the worth of femininity at the workplace is gradually becoming redefined by the evolving cultural and institutional attitudes. New possibilities in women entrepreneurship are being opened by growing awareness of the diversity of leadership styles and the need to be inclusive. The feminine traits and masculine traits can be merged together, and the individuals and businesses can be more flexible and accommodating to leadership.

In conclusion, femininity is a social construct, which is artificial and in development and plays a significant role in shaping the entrepreneurial behavior and the organizational practices. Its focus on cooperation, understanding, and sustainability provides beneficial insights to contemporary business. The development of the femininity-related strengths that make an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem and long-term sustainable development is crucial and should be enhanced.

8. Deconstruction of Gender

The dismantling of gender is the critical analysis and break down of hard and fast gender categories and stereotypes which have historically influenced the social, economic and institutional forms. Old dichotomous ideas about gender, including the separation of individuals into male and female are being disproved by new research, which highlights the flexibility and changeability of gender. The scientific study suggests that gender cannot be considered a biological aspect and is the collection of the features that varies in individuals, therefore, questioning the validity of strict gender categories (Joel et al., 2015).

The consequences of such a shift in thinking on the sphere of entrepreneurship and organizational

behavior are significant. Masculine norms like competitiveness, individualism and risk-taking have frequently influenced conventional entrepreneurial models. These are the conventions that have conventionally influenced the perception and evaluation of leadership and in most instances, individuals who do not conform to the demands of these conventions are shunned out. The degeneration of leadership will ensure that more styles of leadership are more likely to be recognized and everyone in the entrepreneurial ecosystem can be more fairly represented.

In the recent years, gender diversity in entrepreneurship is becoming a significant aspect. Gender diverse women and individuals are being increasingly involved in the innovation, particularly those industries which hold social impact, sustainability and community involvement as major priorities. The entrepreneurial ecosystems could be more flexible and responsive to breaking the rules of gender norms and promoting creativity and decision-making processes.

Gender deconstruction plays a role in deconstructing oppressive stereotypes as well. To give an example, stereotypes related to risk aversion of women or their capability to become leaders have long been a barrier to their participation in the high-growth business and investment circles. Going against these stereotypes will allow gaining access to financial resources, mentorship, and business opportunities in a more just manner, enhancing the overall economic involvement.

Gender deconstruction, in the sustainability viewpoint, is consistent with more general aim of inclusive development. Sustainable entrepreneurship must have multifaceted thinking and cooperation to solve intricate social and environmental issues. Through the understanding of the fluid and multidimensional character of gender, organizations may facilitate more inclusive practices that can ensure growth and social equity in the long term.

Moreover, growing gender-neutral policies and work conditions are also evidence of a broader shift in the institutional frameworks. Firms are becoming more open to diversity and inclusion strategies, which appreciate the significance of gender diversity as a driver of innovation and competitiveness. The alterations can be particularly applied to the world of startup ecosystems where the flexibility and readiness to new ideas are the keys to success.

To sum up, gender deconstruction is a crucial measure to create more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems. By breaking the traditional norms and being ready to diversity, societies can find the potentials of every person regardless of his/her gender identity. Not only is this promoting social justice, but it is also boosting

innovation, economic growth and sustainable development.

9. Public-Private Dichotomy

The public-private dichotomy is a conventional separation between the public sphere, which is economy, politics and decision making, and the private sphere, which is family, domesticity and taking care of other people. Traditionally, this differentiation has been highly gendered where men take the center stage in the public sphere and women in the private sphere. Even though these boundaries have been changing with time, their impact remains in the social setups, economic involvement, and entrepreneurial chances.

Women have been restricted in accessing education, financial resources and networks in the workplace in most societies due to the fact that they are assigned to the private sphere. The division has also long term effects on the involvement of women in entrepreneurship since business is characterized as a social domain. Consequently, women are likely to encounter structural factors when moving jobs into the business sector such as limited movement, time constraints given unpaid care work and even low access to capital.

The continuation of the public-private divide also influences the perception and respect of the entrepreneurial activities. The role of women in the household including informal labor, care giving and household production is usually not considered or left out of any formal economic gauge. This invisibility does not only restrain the credit given to the women in their economic work but also prevents them to receive formal financial systems and institutional support they need in developing their business.

Nevertheless, these changes in economic and social forms are slowly undermining this dichotomy. The advent of online resources, telecommuting, and home business has softened the demarcation between private and public. As women, they are starting to take advantage of these opportunities and venture into entrepreneurship even as they take care of the home. The online business, micro-enterprises and self-employment models have allowed increased involvement of women in the economy especially in developing situations.

As an entrepreneur, the shift of the public-private divide has great implications on inclusive growth. Incorporating both domestic and economic functions, women entrepreneurs are playing a role in the diversified business models which put to the forefront the flexibility, sustainability, and community involvement. These hybrid forms question conventional beliefs surrounding workspaces, and rewrite the form of entrepreneurial involvement.

Institutional structures and policy interventions are important in curbing the constraints that the public-private dichotomy sets. Some of the policies that can facilitate childcare, flexible working schedules, credit availability, and digital inclusion include reducing the unpaid workload on the family and empowering women to be better-integrated in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Also, it is important to appreciate and acknowledge unpaid and informal labor to develop more inclusive economic systems. In the context of sustainability, the harmonization of the public and the private world is a step in the right direction towards more sustainable and fair economic systems. Entrepreneurship that takes into consideration the realities of women as dual role players can make entrepreneurship more productive, gender equal, and facilitate long term development objectives. To be sustainable in growth, both social and economic aspects need to be incorporated, and this can only be achieved after traditional gendered boundaries are re-examined and changed.

To sum up, the public-private dichotomy continues to be an influential factor in gender inequality in entrepreneurship. Although there is an improvement on the redefining of these boundaries, there are still structural and cultural barriers that hinder maximum involvement of women in economic affairs. To close this gap with the help of policy support, institutional reform, and cultural change is critical to the promotion of inclusive entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

10. Indicators of Status

Without financial and economic resources, women must also have equal access and control over their resources to achieve gender equality. The right to income and property, credit and productive means is not only a source of individual empowerment, but also a source of sustainable and inclusive economic progress. In India, the empowerment of women economically is becoming an important avenue of boosting productivity, alleviating poverty, and achieving long-term developmental outcomes (Asian Development Bank, 2023).

Gender equality in the distribution of economic resources at the micro and macro levels bring forth a lot of benefits. On the individual level, access to resources is enhanced which enhances productivity, decision-making, and wellbeing. On the macro level, there is a positive correlation between gender equality and economic growth since effective use of human capital increases the productivity of the nation. Irrespective of these benefits, women still lack access to financial and economic resources as much as men do, and this situation is mostly attributed to historical imbalances, institutional and systemic constraints, and social norms.

Despite the advancements being made in some respects like education and workforce participation, there are still uneven rates of change across the regions. Women are still being sidelined in terms of their participation in economic activities especially in the entrepreneurial sector. Women tend to be undermined in the power structure where economic decisions are made, hence their inability to affect the provision of economic resources and opportunities. This underrepresentation also helps to support structural inequalities in economies and business systems.

Women are also more likely to be hit by economic crises (especially in emerging economies). Cuts in the state budget on basic services like healthcare and education coupled with poor social safety nets would have a great effect on women and girls. In these times, women tend to become a safety net of last resort, where they must play more economic and caregiving roles to serve the families. Their access to resources is however limited limiting their ability to effectively respond to these challenges.

The economic growth can enhance employment and general welfare, but it does not necessarily result in gender equality in decision-making and resource allocation. Although there has been an improvement of women involvement in the workforce in certain areas, this has not necessarily resulted in the same number of women in leadership positions or access to financial resources. This underscores the necessity of specific policies that can tackle structural constraints and facilitate inclusive economic integration.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) and migration are other global economic processes that affect access to resources by women. In other settings, FDI has led to the employment of women, especially in the labour heavy industries. These opportunities can however be coupled with bad working conditions where labour protections are weak. In the same way, migration has seen a number of women to work in terms of remittance to supplement household income, however, it has also left them vulnerable in terms of employment and working conditions, as well as social protection.

It is important that development cooperation and financial systems are used to empower women economically. Nonetheless, issues like weak implementation mechanisms, poor quality data and lack of accountability usually affect the success of these initiatives. Moreover, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles in financial institutions, and this does not provide them with a chance to affect financial policies and practices.

Entrepreneurship is a great avenue through which women can become the source of economic resources. The overall contribution of women entrepreneurship to sustainable development is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Contribution of Women's Entrepreneurship to Sustainable Development

| Dimension | Contribution | Outcome |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Economic | Job creation, income generation | Economic growth |
| Social | Inclusion, empowerment | Reduced inequality |
| Environmental | Sustainable practices | Long-term sustainability |
| Innovation | New ideas and solutions | Competitive advantage |

Women entrepreneurs tend to create new and adaptable business models that respond to the prevailing constraints and add to the economic growth. Research on the entrepreneurship of women in various economy settings underscores how women can maneuver structural obstacles using informal networks, community-support, and alternative financing systems (Welter et al., 2006).

To sum it up, the possession of economic resources is one of the most important indices of the status and empowerment of women. To achieve inclusive entrepreneurship and sustainable development, it is necessary to address the gender gaps in financial access, employment, and decision-making. Enhancing the strength of institutional structures, access to financial systems, and the norms of discrimination are possible to boost the economic engagement of women and make the economy more resilient in the long term.

11. Female Foeticide

Female foeticide is a practice whereby a pregnancy is terminated after it is found out that the foetus is female. Although it is illegal, the tradition is still practiced in some parts of the world, which is a strong indication of the gender bias and socio-cultural preferences towards male offspring. According to historical and demographic data, the level of this problem is quite high, census statistics demonstrates that there is a sharp disproportion in the sex ratio, and it is possible to speak about systematic discrimination against female children (National Portal of India).

The fact that the child sex ratio is decreasing with time shows the extent of the issue. According to the official statistics, the number of girls is steadily decreasing in comparison with the number of boys, which can be attributed to the established preferences and discriminations in the society (Press Information Bureau). Not only is this imbalance a breach of the basic human rights, but it also has a wider impact on the social stability and economic development in the long run.

Female foeticide and infanticide are two phenomena related to deep-rooted gender inequality, which starts even prior to birth. Innovations in prenatal diagnostics have been used in a negative way, especially in healthcare, as they have been applied to allow sex-selective abortions. The government responded by introducing the Pre-Conception and

Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act that banned prenatal sex determination and sought to prohibit the practice (Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994). Nevertheless, there are still enforcement issues and pressure of the society, which make it less effective.

Female foeticide has been perpetuated by socio-economic issues including dowry, division of labour based on gender, as well as economic opportunities not available to women. In most traditional contexts, the daughters are viewed as a drain on the finances whereas the sons are seen as the potential source of income. Such perceptions are enhanced by the patriarchal norms, which place less value on the contribution of women in the household and the general economy.

On a larger scale, such practices of gender discrimination go against the natural diversity and complexity of gender identities. The modern discourse of gender stresses that social inequalities are created and can be redesigned with help of awareness and institutionalization (O'Connor, 2019). To deal with these biases, it is necessary not only to enforce the law but also to change the attitude of the society towards girls and women as equal values.

The need to comprehend gender equality as a key element of sustainable development is also emphasized in recent discourse. By encouraging equal opportunities and confronting discriminatory actions, it is possible to enhance the social performance and economic productivity in a considerable way (Pennington, 2024). Deprivation of rights of women to exist means that the societies lose human capital that is important in terms of long-term development and potential of innovations. The problem of female foeticide does not solely exist in the rural environment but is widespread in both urban and rural environments, meaning that economic development does not eradicate gender bias. Rather, specific measures like education, awareness campaigns, and empowerment programs are required to combat the factors underlying discrimination.

To sum up, female foeticide is a serious problem of gender equality and sustainable development. It is an utterance of deeply rooted socio-cultural attitudes that devalue the woman and restrict her views in economic and social life. The fight against this problem should be multi-dimensional involving

legal action, institutional change, and cultural change. Girls need to be ensured survival, protection and empowerment to ensure inclusive societies, long-term economic and developmental objectives.

12. Likelihood of Survival

Use of prenatal sex determination methods like ultrasound has greatly influenced the chances of survival of female children in India. Although these technologies are scientifically useful, they have been abused to determine the sex of the foetus and to perform sex-selective abortions which in many cases are performed as early as 12 weeks of gestation. With the advent of ultrasound machines in the 1980s, and the presence of legal abortions, sex-selective practices increased. This has resulted in a significant percentage of gendered based termination of pregnancies, and this is a case of deeply-rooted societal discrimination of male children. This is directly connected with the degradation of women in the society, where daughters tend to be seen as an economic liability because of the dowry, lack of job opportunities and the gender role expectations. In most instances, females are coerced to engage in abortions against their will causing psychological distress and perpetuating gender based violence. The decreasing child sex ratio has sounded alarm bells among the demographers who have given long-term social impact as a result of this, including lack of brides in marriage market, introduction of such practices as forced marriages, trafficking and polyandry. The sex ratio imbalance has wider implications on the society. Areas that have a smaller number of women might have a rise in crime rates such as sexual violence and exploitation. The experience of India, as well as other states, e.g., China, indicates that the excess of unmarried men may cause social instability and increase the chances of committing crimes related to gender. Although the number of educated and urban people is rising, sons are preferred, especially by the economically advanced and urban communities, where more medical technologies are available.

Some measures that have been taken to curb this problem are introducing legal restrictions of sex determination and sensitizing the society to alter their perception. Nevertheless, laws have not been adequate without implementation and support by the people. The continuation of female foeticide underscores the fact that greater change is still needed in the cultural values, with the focus on the equal value of daughters and sons. Gender equality, education, and empowering women economically are key moves in redressing demographic imbalances and safeguarding the survival and dignity of female children.

13. Symbolic Representations

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14. Human Rights and Legal Framework for Gender Equality

Gender equality is inherently entrenched in both the legal and the human rights frameworks that provide dignity, freedom and equal opportunities to all people. In India, the Constitution offers a robust base of safeguarding these rights by emphasizing

their main provisions that forbid any discrimination and ensure equality in front of the law. Article 14 provides the principle of equality where all the people are treated equally before the law (India Const. art. 14). It is on this basis that gender-based discrimination is addressed and social and economic participation is fair.

To this end, Article 15 makes it explicit that any form of discrimination based on sex, religion, caste, or place of birth is forbidden, thus cementing the affirmation of gender equality in the public and private life (India Const. art. 15). This is especially critical in tackling structural inequalities that hinder access to education, employment and economic resources among women. Moreover, Article 21 secures the right to life and individual freedom that the courts have construed loosely to encompass the rights to dignity, personal autonomy and proper living conditions (India Const. art. 21). All these constitutional protections put in place an enabling environment in empowering women and involving them in economic activities.

On a global scale, world human rights mechanisms also enhance the legalisation of gender equality. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a comprehensive treaty that seeks to eradicate discrimination against women in all its forms including social, economic and political aspects (CEDAW, 1979). It commits states who are signatories to take proactive action to give women equal opportunity and access to resources.

Likewise, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) highlights basic civil liberties such as equality before the law, freedom against discrimination and the right to engage in the public life (ICCPR, 1966). These rights are critical in making sure that women are able to participate fully in the decision making processes and the institutional structures. This is supplemented by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which acknowledges the rights of women in work, education and adequate standard of living which are essential in the economic empowerment of women (ICESCR, 1966). Moreover, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) emphasizes the necessity of safeguarding the rights of girls since the very beginning of their lives, since they need to be provided with education, healthcare, and free of discrimination (CRC, 1989). The CRC leads to social and economic inclusion in the long term by tackling the issue of gender inequality at the primordial level.

To sum up, the national and international legal frameworks are essential in promoting gender equality. Although these provisions provide good legal frameworks, their efficacy is dependent on how well they are implemented, the accountability of institutions and whether they transform the

society. These frameworks need to be reinforced to facilitate inclusive development, improve the economic inclusion of women, and sustainable growth.

15. Indian and Global Perspectives on Gender Construction and Representation

The construction of gender in India is a complicated process of interrelation of traditional values and contemporary institutionalization. Although the Indian society still practices strict gender roles in the home set-up, there is a growing embrace of women in the leadership and governance. Evidence based on surveys shows that the majority of the population acknowledges women as equally competent political leaders and this is some improvement in the public perception. Nevertheless, this change does not become equally obvious in domestic spheres, where the principles of patriarchy are still present, and women have to adjust to the role of subordinates. This has a duality that shows the contradiction between the empowerment of the people and subordination of the gender relations.

The principles of the constitution offer a guideline in dealing with such inequalities. Article 39(a) underlines the right to the proper livelihood of every citizen, which facilitates the equal accessibility to the economic welfare (India Const. art. 39(a)). Also, Article 51(c) enhances the respect to the international law and treaty commitments and makes India adherent to the international standards of gender equality (India Const. art. 51(c)). In spite of these provisions, structural barriers still restrict women to the full involvement in economic and entrepreneurial activities.

At the international level, gender inequalities are quantitatively assessed by using indices, including the Global Gender Gap Report, which examines the economic participation, education, health, and political empowerment. The relatively low position of India is indicative of country-wide inequalities especially in economic participation and opportunity (World Economic Forum, 2020). These inequalities mean that, although some strides have been achieved in some aspects, there still exist large gaps in the attainment of equal access to resources and decision-making authority.

To overcome these imbalances, institutional interventions like women reservations in local governance have been put in place. Research on the role of women in the local self-government indicates that these efforts would bring about better representation and empower women to participate in the decision-making process (Pathak & Bharti, 2021). These programs help in enhancing inclusive governance systems and offer a platform on which the economy can be broadly engaged.

Gender roles and expectations are further influenced by the creation of masculinity and

femininity. Gender is not just a biological classification, but a social construct, which is affected by the cultural norms and practices in institutions. Research shows that gender attributes are not universal across various environments, and that it is hard to rigidly describe masculine and feminine attributes (Twenge, 1999). The social environment plays a very significant role in strengthening this type of identities since members will alter their behaviours based on the same sex and mixed gender interactions (Pickard and Strough, 2003).

Moreover, gender expression is also situationalized and is also contextual particularly when it comes to peer and institutional contexts. The existence of different dimensions of masculinity and femininity can be noticed in individuals depending on the social needs and contacts with groups (Mehta and Dementieva, 2016). This brings out the dynamism of gender and emphasizes the need to incorporate context to comprehend gender roles.

Media and cultural depiction can have a major effect to the understanding of masculinity and femininity. The traditional media has been characterized in a manner that advances stereotypes by portraying women as reliant and housewives, and men as the dominating and economic participants. Objectification and gender discrimination are present even in the face of the new media that has been out to shatter such stereotypes by displaying women in different career professions. The advent of digital media has simply worsened this situation, as it has provided the tools of self-expression, along with the means of continuing the discriminatory attitude.

In conclusion, the process of gender construction in India is dynamic and it is influenced by the cultural norms, institutional structures and globalization. Despite the positive influence of legal intervention of the bylaw and policy, there is still the issue of socio-cultural barriers that can hinder gender equality. These issues need a comprehensive solution which involves legal reform, economic empowerment and cultural change. Inclusive representations and equal opportunities must be encouraged to foster sustainable development and empower the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

16. Conclusion

The paper concludes that gender roles are dynamic, socially constructed and that they are so embedded in the cultural, institutional and economic systems. These ranks are significant in regard to participation in entrepreneurship, access to resources and development in general socio-economic aspects. Indian environment In Indian environment, despite progressive legal policies and legislative practices, gender norms are still ingrained and limit complete participation of women in the entrepreneurial

landscapes. The structural features such as disproportionate access to finance, social norms, and mobility are yet to be a significant obstacle that has slowed down inclusive growth. The analysis indicates that cultural concepts like masculinity and femininity are important to the development of leadership styles, organizational behavior, and entrepreneurial capability perceptions. As much as at times, the traditional standards of masculinity dominate in the business world, feminine traits, such as teamwork, empathy, and sustainability-focused thinking are slowly becoming the indispensable resource of the modern entrepreneurship. This gap is vital to sealing to increase innovation and resiliency. Furthermore, judicial intervention, including the law, has also been able to bring gender justice, although its functionality and social acceptance are key determinants of its success. Female foeticide and disparity in access to economic resources are also issues that highlight the existence of gender inequality, and its overall implication on demographic balance and economic development. Lastly, gender equality cannot be achieved without multi-dimensional approach that involves policy change, institutionalization, cultural change, and economic empowerment. Inclusive entrepreneurship is not only a good promotion in terms of the growth of women participation, but also sustainable development, social justice, and economic sustainability in the long run.

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