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From Constraints to Catalyst: A Constraint–Motivation Perspective on Women's Entrepreneurship in India

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurs in developing nations face persistent structural, sociocultural, and institutional constraints. The purpose of the study is to examines how constraints faced by women act not only as barriers but also as motivational drivers shaping entrepreneurial intention. Grounded in the push–pull motivation theory, the study explores how adverse challenges and pull factors interact to impact women's decision to pursue entrepreneurship. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires from employed women, and the data were analysed using PLS-SEM. The findings of the study identified key constraints, which include family responsibilities, financial constraints, gender discrimination, and institutional constraints, and examined how these constraints are transformed into motivational factors such as achievement, financial independence, work-life balance, and government and market opportunities. The study proposes and empirically tests a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between constraint, motivation, and intention. The findings of the study extend push–pull motivation theory by describing how constraints function as catalytic forces that shape women's entrepreneurial intention.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, Push and Pull Motivation Theory, PLS-SEM, Developing Nations (India), Constraints/ Challenges, Motivational Drivers

Introduction

In the Indian context, entrepreneurship has traditionally been perceived as a male-dominated phenomenon; however, this perception is gradually changing (Nafees et al., 2025). Studies show that promoting women entrepreneurship contributes to the socioeconomic development of nations (Jamali, 2009; Verheul et al., 2006). The study conducted by Minniti and Naude (2010) proposed that the growing trend of women's entrepreneurship in developing nations, such as India, has generated a positive and significant impact on overall household welfare and consumption. The women caregiving role in the household ecosystem creates a network effect, which results in increased entrepreneurial activities (Datta & Gailey, 2012). Entrepreneurship is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that provides economic security to women (Itani et al., 2011) and offers a platform for self-expression, enabling women to become financially independent and empowered individuals (Jamali, 2009).

A report published by the government in 2025 shows that the number of startups owned by women has increased dramatically, 1,943 in 2017 to 17,405 in 2024. The statistical figures highlight a positive trend towards female entrepreneurship and women taking the lead roles in the Indian startup ecosystem.[1]

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[1] https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/women-in-india-2025-govt-data-shows-surge-in-labour-force-startups-and-financial-control/photostory/120042295.cms?picid=120042791

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The statistical figures highlight the rapid growth in the number of women entrepreneurs. However, despite the growing participation, women entrepreneurship remains challenging in developing nations such as India, as women often lack equal opportunities and continue to face unique structural and socioeconomic challenges (Panda & Dash, 2014). In India, most of the society revolves around a set of customs where the women's duty is only cemented to the family and nurturing roles. These customs are the main drivers of the widespread prejudice against women, which marginalises their participation in entrepreneurial activities.

Country-specific studies in developing nations have contributed rich and in-depth inisghts into sociocultural and political challenges faced by women entreprenurs. However, such studies tend to offer geographically bound perspectives, resulting in a limited understanding of the broader, macroscopic factors that constrain women's entrepreneurship across the developing world.

This study addresses this gap in two important ways. First, it identifies the key constraints (push factors) faced by women entrepreneurs and systematically classifies these constraints as pull factors. Second, the study proposes a conceptual framework that explains how these constraints act not only as barriers but also as drivers of entrepreneurial motivation among women entrepreneurs. The present study is based on push–pull motivation theory. How constraints/challenges (push) and positive aspirations (pull) motivate women to pursue entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial intention). The present study makes two important contributions to entrepreneurship theory and practice. First, it extends the entrepreneurship literature by systematically identifying the key constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in developing countries and by demonstrating the interrelationships among multiple constraints that collectively create hostile entrepreneurial environments for women.

The structure of the paper is organised as follows. The second section presents a literature review of the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in developing nations, such as India. The third section presents the research methodology, followed by the findings and interpretation of the results. The final section concludes the paper and discusses the key implications and limitations of the study.

Research Objectives

- To identify the key constraints (push factors) faced by women entreprenurs.
- To examine how these constraints (push factors) transform into pull (motivational) factors.
- To develop a conceptual framework that explains how the push factors (constraints) transform into motivational (pull) factors that drives entrepreneurial intention among women.

Literature Review

Conceptual Definiton of Entrepreneurial Intention

Over the past few decades, entrepreneurial intention has gained growing international attention, particularly among entrepreneurship scholars (e.g., DeClercq, Benson, & Martin, 2012, in Canada; Douglas, 2013, in Thailand; Lope Pihie & Bagheri, 2013, in Malaysia). The heightened scholarly attention given to exploring entrepreneurial intention is due to the critical importance of intention for predicting individuals' choice of vocation, entrepreneurial goals, plans, and efforts (Ajzen, 1991; Elfving, Bra¨nnback & Carsrud, 2009; Kickul, Wilson, & Marlino, 2008) and consequently their real engagement in entrepreneurship (Verheul et al., 2012) Moreover, entrepreneurship – conceptualised as the creation of new ventures (Schumpeter, 1965) – is widely recognised as a key driver of socioeconomic development in both developed and developing economies. Entrepreneurial intention is defined as a conscious, strong desire and plan to start a new business venture. Moreover, entrepreneurial intention is a psychological bridge between an individual's entrepreneurial thinking and the actual venture creation. It is mainly influenced by personal factors, social norms, and perceived opportunities, which ultimately drive individuals to pursue their own new venture.

Constraints Faced by Women Entrepreneurship in Developing Nations – The Entrepreneur's Perspective

A plethora of past research suggests that women entreprenurs in developing nations face numerous challenges from varying external and internal factors. Internal factors are primarily embedded by family and socioeconomic restrictions, and this can be addressed by the entrepreneurs' agency, whereas external challenges are beyond the scope of entrepreneurs. For instance, women entreprenuers in India faced internal family restrictions whereas in Afraca, women entreprenuers faced internal family and societal restrictions but they are impacted by external labour market challenges as well (Kuada, 2009).

The following sections mainly highlight the key constraints that impact women entrepreneurs in developing nations:

Gender Discrimination: Entrepreneurship is often recognised as a man's domain (Panda & Dash, 2013). Women entrepreneurs face persistent structural and sociocultural barriers that erode their credibility and constrain their participation in entrepreneurship. A plethora of past literature suggests that women encounter both overt and covert discrimination, including wage disparities and diminished societal valuation of independent women (Karatas-Ozkan et al., 2010; Maden, 2015). Women are less likely to pursue entrepreneurship, as it often conflicts with traditional gender roles that position women primarily as wives and mothers, thereby discouraging their entrepreneurial aspirations (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2003; Welter & Smallbone, 2003). In patriarchal and male-dominated labour markets, women's entrepreneurial ambitions are further constrained by family resistance and societal expectations, as observed in Indian women, who are confined to the roles of household responsibilities and caregivers, and they have to adhere to cultural and religious norms (Jamali, 2009; Yousuf Danish & Lawton Smith, 2012).

Work-Family Conflict: Work-life conflict is another challeng faced by women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs have to deal with the burden of managing a business and at the same time staying committed to the caregiving roles at home. This is a source of stress, time-poverty, and role conflict (Itani et al., 2011). Women leave the workforce because of sociocultural expectations to assume primary caregiving responsibility and many do not have the possibility to re-enter the labour market, even after the family demands have been met (Andersson et al., 2007; Brush et al., 2009). The role imbalance described above also limits women's participation in the networking and mentoring activities that are critical to the advancement of their businesses.

Financial Constraints: A major obstacle for women entrepreneurs in emerging economies is the lack of accessible finances (Maden, 2015; Ramadani et al., 2015; Naguib & Jamali, 2015; Jamali, 2009; Halkias et al., 2011). Women entrepreneurs are often perceived as high-risk borrowers, leading to discriminatory biases against women (Thampy, 2010). Even if women entrepreneurs are eligible for loans, they face barriers like information asymmetry, lack of credit history, and lack of collateral (Panda, 2012; Sandhu et al., 2012; Thampy, 2010). Capital acquisition is a major issue for women entrepreneurs and is caused by their weak credit profile, which is in turn caused by incomplete employment history, lower life earnings, and less personal savings (Andersson et al., 2007; Carter et al., 2001). Institutional biases within government-supported financial programmes further exacerbate these challenges, as male-owned enterprises are often prioritised for funding (Halkias et al., 2011). In some cases, women deliberately avoid external financing due to risk aversion and discomfort with assuming responsibility for borrowed capital (Ama et al., 2014).

Lack of Infrastructural Support: Inadequate entrepreurial infrastructure limits the entrepreneurial performance of women. The challenges include limited access to technology, business development services, and ancillary support mechanisms. It is often evident that women lack resources because they often lack information, time, or networks required to utilise them effectively. Moreover, restricted access to professional consulting services, mentoring, and networking opportunities significantly undermines firm growth and sustainability (Robb & Coleman, 2010). Furthermore, inadequate childcare services increase work-life balance challenges resulting in guilt, stress, and emotional strain (McClelland et al., 2005). The absence of adequate recognition and societal appreciation for women's entrepreneurial efforts further contributes to demotivation and reduced entrepreneurial persistence (Itani et al., 2011).

Motivation Drivers

One of the most important dimensions in entrepreneurship is the motivational factors that drive individuals to start their own business venture. This goal-directed behaviour could be shaped by a number of factors ranging from personal, social, cultural, and economic to environmental. McClelland's (1961) motivation theory categorises the entrepreneur's driving forces into three needs: achievement, power, and affiliation. Entrepreneurial motivation has been analysed from the economic perspective and the psychological perspective (Kirkwood & Campbell-Hunt, 2007). From a psychological perspective, motivation is a fundamental construct at the individual level that enhances goal attainment by activating, directing, and sustaining human behaviour. It is the operative force that co-ordinates the mental and physical energy to purposeful action and the behaviour to achieve a specific end (Randjelovic, 2024). In the context of entrepreneurship, motivation is the driving force that encourages women to seek out opportunities, deal with ambiguity, and create a business.

Theoretical Framework: Push–Pull Motivation Theory

The Push and Pull Motivation Theory was first developed by Roy C. Dann (1977). According to this theory, push factors refer to constraints or adverse conditions that drive individuals, due to necessity-based or intrinsic needs, towards entrepreneurship, whereas pull factors represent positive aspirations and opportunities that attract individuals towards entrepreneurial activities.

This research centres on the Push–Pull Motivation Theory, and suggests that financial, social, and institutional constraints (which are push factors) drive women into entrepreneurship. On the other hand, pull factors such as self-employment, financial freedom, autonomy, and self-fulfillment, act as inspirational elements that drive women to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The 'push' perspective suggests that financial constraints, a lack of job opportunities, or social frameworks that restrict women from working in the formal economy lead to the promotion of entrepreneurial behaviour (Hughes, 2003). A substantial proportion of women entrepreneurs in the existing literature are therefore characterised as necessity-driven or push entrepreneurs. Such a phenomenon is prominent in developing economies with low-income levels, where the options available to women to secure income are severely restricted.

In the Indian context, a combination of financial constraints and gender discrimination serve as the primary push factors that compel women to take on entrepreneurial activities, often as a means for economic survival and social advancement.

How Constraints Shape Women's Entrepreneurial Intention

Women engage with entrepreneurship journals not just as opportunity-driven but with a more noteworthy problematised perspective of the constraints that drive women's entrepreneurial intention, where structural, social, and psychological barriers function as push mechanisms that catalyse entrepreneurial behaviour. The current research draws on the push–pull motivation theory, where circumstances of gender bias, work-family conundrum, financial challenges, and no structures of support foster dissatisfaction with conventional roles; hence, these obstacles push women towards entrepreneurship as a means for further autonomy and self-determination. According to the study conducted by Segal et al. (2005), they classified entrepreneurial motivations into four broad categories: the pursuit of independence, financial incentives, family-related considerations, and work-related factors.

Work-Family Conflict Constraints: Numerous previous studies show that family responsibilities are framed as a constraint, but in some ways it often operates as a powerful motivational driver of women's entrepreneurial intentions. The increased role conflict caused by social norms requiring the balancing of home, caregiving, and work roles leads to dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction serves as a motivator to pursue other career options that provide more self-direction and control over schedule. Therefore, self-employment becomes a means to gain control and the ability to manage the work and family roles more effectively. Family responsibilities may, therefore, operate as push factors and work-life balance as pull factors that motivate women to pursue business ownership as an option.

In the Indian context, marital status and family structure shape how constraints are internalised and converted into motivation. For unmarried women or those without partners, fewer domestic obligations and reduced normative pressures may redirect career ambitions towards entrepreneurial pursuits, positioning entrepreneurship as a viable and attractive alternative to traditional employment (Akehurst et al., 2012). In many scenarios, the absence of encouragement or active resistance from family members intensifies women's need for independence and self-determination, thereby strengthening their motivation to establish autonomous economic identities (Rani & Rao, 2007; Sevä & Öun, 2015). Conversely, the presence of support reduces perceived risk and legitimises women's entrepreneurial aspirations, facilitating venture initiation.

Table 1 illustrates how the constraints/pull factors stimulate specific psychological processes that transform these constraints into pull motivational drivers, which in turn strengthen women's entrepreneurial intention.

Table 1: Transformation of Push Constraints into Pull Motivational Factors Driving Women's Entrepreneurial Intention

Constraint (Push Factors)	*Key Psychological Process*	*Pull Motivational Factors*
Financial constraints	Economic vulnerability	Ownership, financial independence and security
Gender discrimination	Identity threat	Achievement and self-independence, self-identity
Lack of institutional support	Adaptive learning	Opportunity recognition
Household responsibilities/Work-family conflict	Role interaction need	Flexibility, own time

Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

Family Constraints and Work-Life Motivation: A plethora of past studies show that family responsibilities are framed as a constraint, which often operates as a powerful motivational driver of women's entrepreneurial intention. Heightened role conflict arising from societal expectations to simultaneously fulfil domestic, caregiving, and professional roles generates dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction acts as a push factor, motivating women to seek alternative career paths that offer greater autonomy and perceived flexibility. Empirical evidence supports this perspective; Daly (1991) found that women with children are more likely to engage in self-employment. Entrepreneurship thus emerges as a strategy that provides greater flexibility and control over time, enabling women to better integrate work and family roles. As a result, family constraints may act as *push factors* that transform into *work-life balance motivation* and encourage women to consider entrepreneurial careers as a viable alternative. So from the above literature, it is hypothesised that:

H1: Family constraints have a positive influence on women's work-life balance motivation.

Financial Constraints: Studies show that in developing nations, women face limited access to financial resources (Ahmad et al., 2015). Such constraints increase women's desire for financial autonomy, income stability, and long-term security. Entrepreneurship can be viewed as a pathway to overcome financial vulnerability by enabling income generation and asset ownership (Abu, 2024). Hence, financial constraints may stimulate motivation for financial independence and security. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

H2: Financial constraints have a positive influence on women's motivation for financial independence and security.

Gender Discrimination: In developing nations, gender discrimination often restricts women's progression. The absence of encouragement or active resistance from family members intensifies women's need for independence and self-determination, thereby strengthening their motivation to establish autonomous economic identities (Rani & Rao, 2007; Sevä & Öun, 2015). Although such discriminatory experiences often result in frustration and marginalisation, they paradoxically strengthen women's motivation to attain recognition and achieve personal success. In this context, entrepreneurship emerges as an alternative pathway for achievement, which allows women to bypass exclusionary organisational structures and exercise greater control over their professional trajectories. Hence it is hypothesised that:

H3: Gender discrimination has a positive influence on women's achievement motivation.

Instutututional Constraints: Weak institutional support, complex regulatory procedures, and limited access to markets constitute major institutional constraints for women entrepreneurs. These challenges may increase women's awareness of the importance of government support mechanisms, policy incentives, training programmes, and market access. Consequently, institutional constraints may translate into motivation to leverage government schemes and market opportunities through entrepreneurship. Hence it is hypothised that:

H4: Institutional constraints have a positive influence on women's government- and market-related motivation.

Motivational Drivers: Several motivational factors play a significant role in influencing women's entrepreneurial intentions, driving them to shape their entrepreneurial aspirations. The present study identifies that work-life balance and the desire for financial independence and economic security emerge as core drivers of women's entrepreneurial motivation, particularly in contexts marked by financial exclusion and employment inequality. When women perceive entrepreneurship as a viable pathway to economic self-reliance and long-term financial stability, their overall motivation to pursue entrepreneurial careers is likely to strengthen.

In addition, achievement as a motivator reflects an individual's desire for success, self-realisation, and social recognition; it constitutes a central psychological driver of entrepreneurial behaviour. Beyond personal motivations, institutional and market-related motivations, such as access to government support programmes, subsidies, and expanding market opportunities, further enhance perceptions of feasibility and confidence in entrepreneurship. Collectively, these motivational dimensions reinforce entrepreneurial intention by increasing both the perceived desirability and attainability of entrepreneurial careers among women.

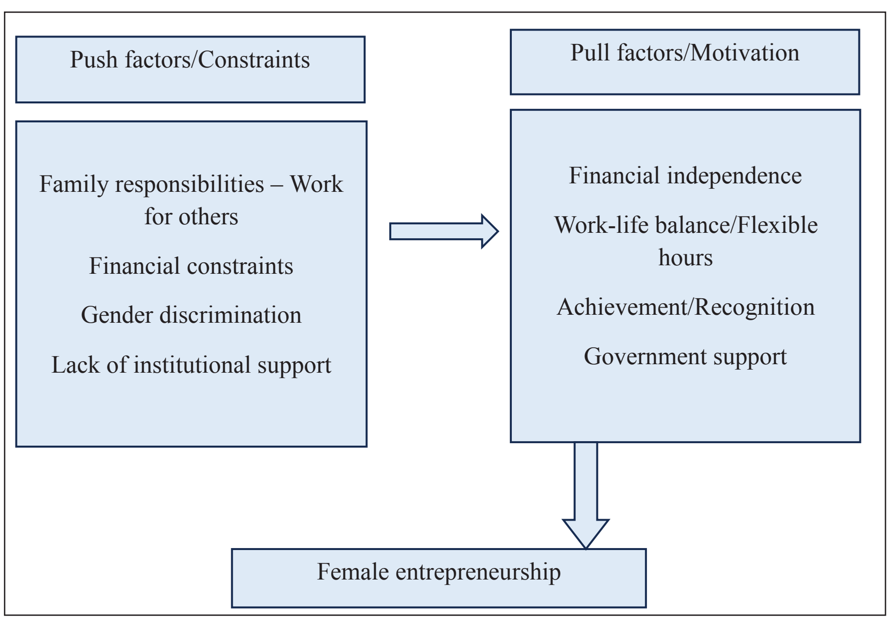
Hence it is hypothesised that:

H5: Achievement motivation has a positive influence on women's entrepreneurial intention.

H6: Work-life balance has a positive impact on women's entrepreneurial intention.

H7: Government- and market-related motivation has a positive influence on women's entrepreneurial intention.

H8: Motivation for financial independence and security has a positive influence on women's entrepreneurial motivation.



Source: As proposed by the authors.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Sample, Sampling Technique, and Data Collection

The primary data for this study were collected using a survey-based quantitative research methodology. The study focused on women as the target population. A survey was designed for women in the middle to lower-middle-income brackets. The study used a simple random sampling technique, which provides a representative sample of the total population. This method reduces bias since every individual in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample.

All constructs in the study were modified and adapted from validated scales in previous research (See Appendix 1). Each construct was measured using a five-point Likert scale. The scale has five options ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Apart from the constructs, sociodemographic data – age and level of education – was also collected to contextualise the sample.

Data Analysis Tools

PLS-SEM 4 software tool was used for data analysis. The data analysis involved a two-step process; first, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the scale reliability and validity. Second, the path analysis model was evaluated to examine the hypothesised relationship among constructs.

Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 2 illustrates the values of scale reliability, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) metric. Scale reliability measures the internal consistency of items in a construct. In contrast, composite reliability measures the overall reliability of latent constructs, and AVE indicates the amount of variance captured by a construct. The results indicate that composite reliability values for all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010), ranging from 0.743 to 0.979, thereby confirming satisfactory construct reliability. This suggests that the measurement items consistently represent their respective latent constructs.

With regard to convergent validity, the AVE values for all constructs exceed the minimum recommended value of 0.50, with values ranging from 0.592 to 0.959. These findings confirm that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators, showing adequate convergent validity. However, the Cronbach's alpha values reveal mixed levels of internal consistency across constructs. Specifically, work-life (family) constraints (α = 0.958), achievement motivation (α = 0.956), and government and market motivation (α = 0.905) demonstrate strong internal consistency. In contrast, entrepreneurial intention (α = 0.311), financial constraint (α = 0.577), gender discrimination (α = 0.433), inadequate institutional facilities (α = 0.504), financial independence and security motivation (α = 0.534), and work-life balance motivation (α = 0.579**)** exhibit relatively low alpha values. Overall, the construct scale items consider the strong composite reliability and convergent validity, which explain adequate reliability and validity, supporting its suitability for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

Variables	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*Composite Reliability (rho_c)*	*Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*
Work-life (family constraints)	0.958	0.979	0.959
Financial constraint	0.577	0.818	0.694
Gender discrimination	0.433	0.773	0.633
Inadequate instituional facilities (constraints)	0.504	0.801	0.668
Achivement (motivation)	0.956	0.968	0.883
Government and market (motivation)	0.905	0.955	0.913
Financial indepedence and security (motivation)	0.534	0.808	0.679
Work-life balance (motivation)	0.579	0.826	0.704
Entrepreneurial intention	0.311	0.743	0.592

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 3 shows the age distribution of respondents. Most participants (64.7%) were aged 25 to 35 years. This was followed by 24.8% of respondents who were below 25 years. Also, 9.1% belonged to the age category 36–45 years, and only 1.5% were above 45 years. Overall, the age distribution shows the sample is predominantly young adults.

Table 3: Age

		Frequency	*%*	*Valid %*	*Cumulative %*
Valid	25–35	300	64.7	64.7	64.7
	36–45	42	9.1	9.1	73.7
	Above 45 years	7	1.5	1.5	75.2
	Below 25	115	24.8	24.8	100.0
	Total	464	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents regarding educational qualifications. From the 464 respondents, 47.6% reported having completed education up to 10th–12th standard level, while 43.5% possessed a bachelor's degree. Further, 8.8% of respondents claimed to have no education. In the general context, the distribution shows a fairly adequate balance regarding the educational attainment of the participants.

Table 4: Education Qualification

		Frequency	*%*	*Valid %*	*Cumulative %*
Valid	Male	221	47.6	47.6	47.6
	Female	202	43.5	43.5	91.2
	Prefer not to say (Others)	41	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	464	100.0	100.0	

Path Coefficent – Hypothesis Results

Table 5 and Fig. 2 illustrate the result of the hypothesis of the conceptual framework model. The outcomes of the study reveal that all the hypothesised relationships between constraints and their corresponding motivational drivers are positive and statistically significant. Specifically, family constraints significantly influence work-life balance motivation ($\beta = 0.371$, $t = 6.718$, $p < 0.001$), which indicates that household and family responsibilities motivate women to seek entrepreneurship as a means of achieving greater flexibility and control over time. Similarly, financial constraints strongly predict financial independence and security motivation ($\beta = 0.753$, $t = 25.176$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting economic vulnerability as a powerful driver of ownership and security-oriented motivation.

Further, gender discrimination has a significant positive effect on achievement motivation ($\beta = 0.390$, $t = 8.263$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that experiences of bias and exclusion stimulate women's desire for achievement and self-identity through entrepreneurial pursuits. Likewise, institutional constraints significantly influence government- and market-related motivation ($\beta = 0.377$, $t = 7.369$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that weak institutional support encourages women to seek opportunities within alternative market and policy environments.

Furthermore the outcomes of the study show the effects of motivational drivers on entrepreneurial intention, achievement ($\beta = 0.147$, $t = 2.942$, $p = 0.003$), government and market facilitates ($\beta = 0.198$, $t = 3.841$, $p < 0.001$), and financial independence and security ($\beta = 0.306$, $t = 4.351$, $p < 0.001$) all exert positive and statistically significant effects on women's entrepreneurial intention. Among these, financial independence and security motivation emerges as the strongest predictor, underscoring the central role of economic autonomy in shaping women's entrepreneurial aspirations.

In contrast, work-life balance motivation does not have a statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.072$, $t = 0.963$, $p = 0.335$). This finding suggests that although family constraints increase women's desire for flexibility, such a motivation alone may not be sufficient to translate into entrepreneurial intention. This may reflect contextual realities in which flexibility seeking women still face persistent structural barriers – such as limited childcare support, social expectations, or risk aversion – that weaken the direct link between work-life balance motivation and entrepreneurial intention.

Table 5: Hypothesis Results

Path	*Beta*	*Standard Deviation (STDEV)*	*T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)*	*P Values*	*Hypothesis*
Family constraint -> Work-life balance (motivation)	0.371	0.055	6.718	0	Supported
Financial constraint -> Financial independence and security (motivation)	0.753	0.03	25.176	0	Supported
Gender discrimination -> Achievement (motivation)	0.39	0.047	8.263	0	Supported
Institutional constraint -> Government and market (motivation)	0.377	0.051	7.369	0	Supported
Achivement (motivation) -> Entreprenurial intention	0.147	0.05	2.942	0.003	Supported
Government and market (motivation) -> Entrepreneurial intention	0.198	0.052	3.841	0	Supported
Financial independence and security (motivation) -> Entrepreneurial Motivation	0.306	0.07	4.351	0	Supported
Work-life balance (motivation) -> Entrepreneurial intention	0.072	0.071	0.963	0.335	Not supported

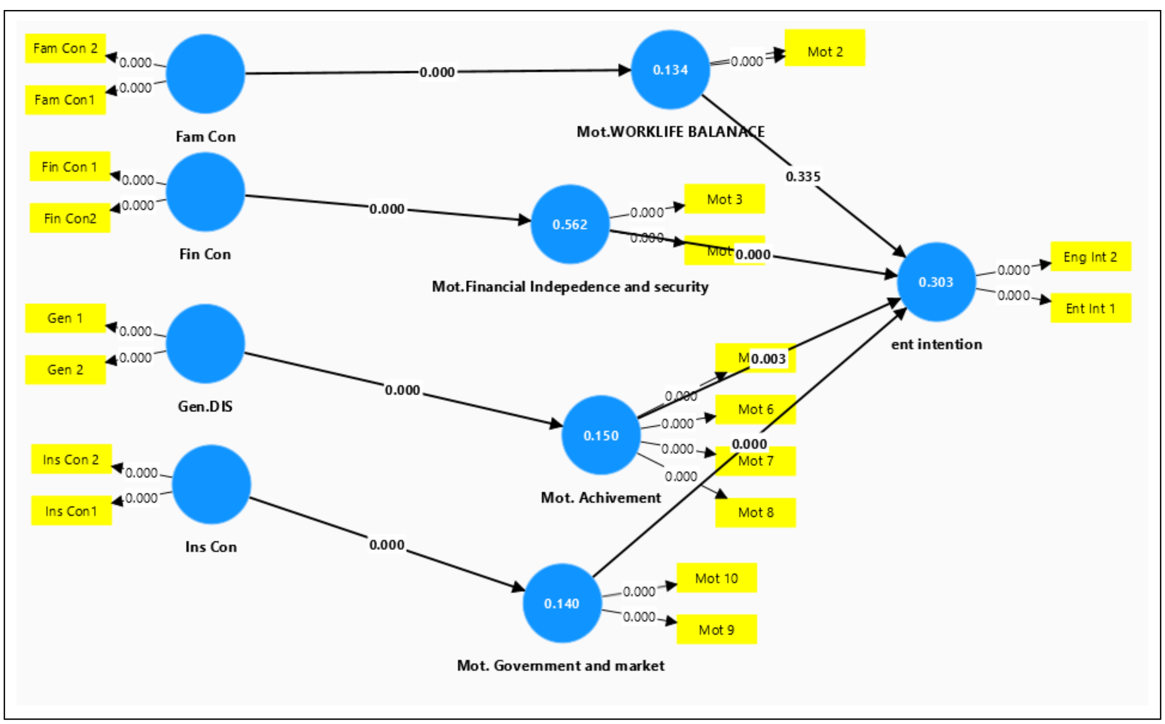


Fig. 2: PLS-SEM: Bootstrapping Results

Discussion – Findings and Interpretations

The present study systematically reviews past literature and finds that women entrepreneurs across developing nations face similar constraints. By aggregating country-level evidence, the study provides valuable insights into the key challenges encountered by women in entrepreneurial pursuits. The review highlights four primary constraints: gender discrimination, household responsibilities impacting work-life balance, financial constraints, and lack of institutional support. Furthermore, the literature indicates that these constraints, often conceptualised as push factors, can also act as motivational drivers, encouraging women to persist in their entrepreneurial journey and fostering the development of entrepreneurial intentions. Based on the push and pull motivation theory the study noted the conceptual framework that explains how the push factors (constraints) transform into motivational (pull) factors that drive entrepreneurial intention among women.

From the conceptual framework model, the results indicate that the relationships between constraints (push factors) and the motivational (pull) drivers are positive and statistically significant. Family constraints emerge as a key driver of work-life balance motivation, which indicates that household and caregiving responsibilities encourage women to consider entrepreneurship as a way to gain greater flexibility and control over their time. A study by Daly (1991) found that women with children are more likely to be self-employed.

A plethora of past studies stated that financial constraints play a role in shaping entrepreneurial motivation; they do not always serve as the primary driver. Instead, for many women entrepreneurs it is the desire to transform a personal interest or hobby into a viable source of income. Many women pursued entrepreneurship not merely out of financial necessity, but to gain autonomy (financial independence) and work for themselves.

In addition, gender discrimination positively influences achievement motivation, indicating that experiences of bias and exclusion stimulate women's desire for success, self-realisation, and identity through entrepreneurial engagement. Similarly, institutional constraints promote government- and market-related motivation, suggesting that limited institutional support encourages women to explore opportunities in alternative market and policy environments.

When examining the effects of these motivational drivers on entrepreneurial intention, achievement motivation, government- and market-related facilitation, and financial independence and security all positively and significantly enhance women's entrepreneurial intentions. Among these, financial independence and security motivation stands out as the strongest predictor, emphasising the central role of economic autonomy in shaping women's entrepreneurial aspirations.

In contrast, work-life balance motivation does not appear to have a significant direct effect on entrepreneurial intention. This suggests that while family responsibilities increase women's desire for flexibility, such motivations alone may not be sufficient to translate into entrepreneurial action. Contextual factors – such as limited childcare support, societal expectations, and risk aversion – may weaken the direct link between flexibility seeking motivation and entrepreneurial intention.

Theoretical Implications

This research broadens the scope of the push–pull motivation theory by examining women entrepreneurship in developing countries with a case study of India. The research provides insight into the theory where push factors such as family and social obligations, financial challenges, institutional gender bias, and a lack of support can serve as barriers, but also function as motivators that drive women to become entrepreneurs. The research also emphasises the barriers to entrepreneurial intentions, and the theory's arguments that personal and social struggles provide a motivating drive as people look for better opportunities and alternatives that provide a sense of self-sufficiency and goal achievement.The research also identifies the positive role of pull factors such as financial independence, personal success, and the availability of government or market opportunities. These factors increase motivation and the entrepreneurial implementation opportunity. This aligns with the pull factors of the push–pull theory. Notably, the study also shows that intrinsic motivations – such as the drive to turn a hobby or personal interest into a business – can act as a powerful pull factor, suggesting that entrepreneurial intention emerges from the interplay of both necessity- and opportunity-driven motivations.

The study integrates both both push and pull dimensions, which deepens the understanding of how the intricacies of both constraining factors and motivating factors shape women's entrepreneurial intention, and offers empirical evidence for the use of push–pull motivation theory in a wide spectrum of culturally and economically disparate scenarios. Moreover, it demonstrates that motivational factors do not uniformly convert into entrepreneurial intention, illuminating the need for more elaborate frameworks that incorporate the contextual and structural variables that affect women's entrepreneurial activity.

Limitations and Future Scope of the Study

The present study offers a roadmap for policymakers aimed at improving the entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in developing economies. The present study emphasised on the developing nations, so in future research the scholars could examine how successful women-led entrepreneurial initiatives in developed countries are to better understand the factors underlying their success and explore how such practices can be adapted to developing country contexts. Also, this research focused on entrepreneurial intention and not the actual engagement in entrepreneurial ventures, and thus, future research should focus on entrepreneurial activity and not just entrepreneurial intention.

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Appendix 1

Variables	*Scale Source*
Entrepreneurial Intention I have very seriously thought of starting a business. I will make every effort to start and run my own business.	Zhao, H., Seibert, S. E., & Hills, G. E. (2005)
Gender Discrimination Constraint Women entrepreneurs are often discouraged by family or colleagues due to gender norms. Women's business ideas are less likely to be supported because of their gender.	Zaman, S. & Naqvi, I. (2022)
Financial Constraints Access to bank loans or formal credit would be difficult for me if I decided to start a business. I have limited personal savings to start my own business.	Muravyev, A., Talavera, O., & Schäfer, D. (2009)
Personal Life Interference with Work (Household Responsibilities) My work suffers because of my personal life. It is hard to work because of personal matters.	Hayman (2005)
Lack of Institutional Support Government policies do not adequately support women who want to start their own businesses. Information about government schemes and incentives for women entrepreneurs is difficult to access.	Kazumi, T. & Kawai, N. (2017)

Variables	Scale Source
Motivational Drivers Work-life Balance of work with family Flexible time	Elllis and Pompli (2002)
Financial Independence Feedom to make independent financial choices Participation in household/business financial decisions	Vieira, K. M., Matheis, T. K., Potrich, A. C. G., de Carvalho Puhle, M., Bressan, A. A., & Klein, L. L. (2024)
Achivement (Desire for Independence) Government policies are supportive of starting and running a business Government laws protect the interests of small entrepreneurs	Scott (2013)