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# Mapping the Nexus of Micro-Entrepreneurship and Women Empowerment: A Bibliometric Analysis

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**Abstract:** In recent years, micro-entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative pathway for empowering women, especially in developing nations where socio-economic and institutional barriers limit their access to formal employment and financial services. Through the mechanism of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), microfinance institutions, and policy initiatives such as MUDRA, Yojana and Start-up India, women are increasingly engaging in income-generating activities that promote financial autonomy, decision-making power, and social mobility. Despite the growing scholarly interest in this domain, a comprehensive synthesis of global research trends, influential contributors, and thematic structures remains limited. This study employs bibliometric analysis using data extracted from the Scopus database (1989–2025) to map the intellectual landscape of research linking micro-entrepreneurship and women empowerment. Utilizing tools such as VOSviewer, the study analyzes co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrences, and bibliographic coupling to uncover patterns in collaboration, conceptual focus, and journal prominence. The findings highlight significant international collaboration, dominant themes in economic, social, and health-related empowerment, and evolving intersections with digital innovation and gender justice. This study not only identifies current research hotspots but also suggests underexplored areas for future inquiry, thereby contributing to academic discourse and evidence-based policy formulation for inclusive development.

**Key words:** Micro-Entrepreneurship; Women Empowerment; Self-Help Groups (SHGs); Bibliometric Analysis; Economic Empowerment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The growing relationship between micro-entrepreneurship and women's empowerment has become a central topic in discussions of modern development, highlighting both the transformative potential and enduring difficulties that women face around the world. The intellectual landscape, significant trends, and changing scholarly narratives that characterize this dynamic nexus are methodically mapped in this work using a thorough bibliometric analysis. The current analysis offers important insights into areas of progress and suggests future prospects for

scholarly research and policy formulation by clarifying the trends and paths of research in this field.

The research on the nexus of micro-entrepreneurship and women empowerment was influenced by several key theoretical frameworks. Institutional theory illuminated how formal and informal structures shaped women's entrepreneurial endeavors, while career theory highlighted individual motivations and paths toward self-employment (Gupta et al., 2019). Feminist theory offered a lens to assess how micro-entrepreneurship challenged traditional gender roles and facilitated greater agency for women (Gupta et al., 2019). Additionally, the four-dimensional framework of women's empowerment—encompassing economic, social, psychological, and political domains—provided a structured basis to evaluate outcomes (Jacob, 2022). Studies also referenced the importance of self-help group models and the role of microfinance in enabling resource access and social capital enhancement (Radhika et al., 2015). Together, these theories underscored the complex interplay of structural, personal, and community factors driving the transformative effects of micro-enterprise initiatives for women's empowerment.

In recent decades, the dual agenda of promoting gender equality and alleviating poverty has drawn global attention toward empowering women through entrepreneurship (Datta & Gailey, 2012). Among various forms of entrepreneurial activity, **micro-entrepreneurship—**characterized by small-scale, often informal, and locally rooted businesses—has emerged as a pivotal means for enhancing the socio-economic status of women, especially in developing nations (Mayoux, 2001). Through micro-enterprises, women gain access not only to income-generating opportunities but also to decision-making power within households and communities, fostering broader dimensions of empowerment such as autonomy, mobility, and social recognition (Kabeer, 1999; Roomi & Parrott, 2008).

The rise of microfinance institutions, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and digital platforms has significantly bolstered women-led micro-enterprises by providing essential financial services, training, and market access (Swain & Wallentin, 2009; Garikipati, 2008). Government initiatives like India’s MUDRA Yojana, Startup India, and support from global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5 and SDG 8) have further strengthened this linkage between micro-entrepreneurship and women's empowerment (UN Women, 2018).

Despite an expanding body of literature exploring this intersection, a systematic synthesis of trends, research hotspots, authorship patterns, and intellectual structures in this domain remains limited. **Bibliometric analysis**, which utilizes quantitative methods to analyze large volumes of academic literature, offers a robust lens to uncover patterns and evolution in this field (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). By mapping key themes and scholarly networks, this study aims to contribute to both academic discourse and policy formulation regarding gender-inclusive entrepreneurship.

This paper, therefore, presents a bibliometric analysis of global literature on micro-entrepreneurship and women empowerment. It seeks to identify research trends, influential authors and institutions, key journals, and thematic clusters shaping the knowledge landscape of this interdisciplinary field.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Microenterprise programs have been shown to enhance women’s empowerment by expanding their capabilities and opportunities within both households and communities, although institutional and normative restrictions still limit their full potential (Langworthy, 2024). Financial access, market sustenance, and social recognition are key to successful microenterprises, which in turn positively impact women’s empowerment and socio-economic status (Shanmugam Munuswamy, 2022). A causal relationship between empowerment and development was established through SHG-supported micro-entrepreneurship, especially from a bottom-of-the-pyramid perspective (Gangwar & Khan, 2022). However, women continue to face challenges such

as low self-esteem and cultural constraints that reinforce traditional gender roles (Kattel, 2021). NGOs use a structured four-step approach to enhance women's economic and social empowerment through micro-enterprise development (Nandan & Kushwaha, 2023). Government interventions, particularly via NABARD, have significantly promoted women's micro-entrepreneurship through SHGs, with over 9,000 training programs benefiting approximately 2.41 lakh members since 2006 (Shetty & Mk, 2019). In Andhra Pradesh, targeted government support has aimed to increase women's ownership of MSMEs from 14% to 30% (N. Madhavi, I. V. Lalithakumari, & M. Padmavathi, 2023). Women entrepreneurs play a vital role in MSME development through capital management, digital marketing, and resilience, facilitated by education and government programs (Indriani et al., 2024). Nevertheless, access to financial services remains a challenge, particularly for women-owned microenterprises (Rantung, 2024). Mentorship and networks have been found to build women's confidence and improve decision-making (Abdurohim, 2023). Islamic microfinance, by promoting risk-sharing and culturally sensitive support, has notably improved women's economic, social, and psychological empowerment in Muslim-majority contexts (Ruslan et al., 2024). Microcredit positively affects the economic standing of rural women, though its impact on social status is limited by patriarchal norms (Nkamnebe & Oladipo, 2024). Integrated social interventions alongside microcredit can lead to more comprehensive empowerment (Nkamnebe & Oladipo, 2024). Microfinance participation enhances entrepreneurship, decision-making, and reduces gender-based violence and inequality (Nepal, 2023). Technological advancements, including digital financial inclusion and e-commerce platforms, have transformed women's entrepreneurship in India, though digital literacy gaps persist (Pal & Bhowmick, 2024). Microfinance-backed entrepreneurship promotes holistic empowerment, though political and social dimensions are less impacted than economic ones (Cadet, 2022). Financial services—credit, savings, and literacy—from institutions beyond NGOs are vital for low-income women's economic participation in Latin America and the Caribbean (Almeyda-Stemper, 1996). Tailored microfinance products and services are essential to overcome financial barriers for women (Kato, 2023). Microfinance offers women-specific financial services—credit, savings, insurance, and remittances—fostering business growth and independence (Amudha & Banu, 2009). Gender-sensitive services that consider women's dual productive and reproductive roles are needed (Arunachalam, 2008). Broader financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs is promoted through programs like Banking on Women (Schnabel & McNally, 2017). Financial literacy improves women's confidence, financial management, and strategic planning (Srivastava, 2024; Mustafa et al., 2024; Akpuokwe et al., 2024; Deka, 2015). It leads to better business outcomes, as shown through links to financial education, cash forecasting, and performance (Tumba et al., 2022). Tailored training enhances financial skills, increases business assets, and empowers women (Abdul Malik, 2023; Buvinic et al., 2020). Budgeting skills specifically influence business success (Baporikar & Akino, 2020). While some papers note the overall importance of financial literacy without highlighting budgeting (Malik, 2023; Urefe et al., 2024; Fonseca & Lord, 2019), Ali et al. (2018) found that budget control alone explains 20% of financial literacy variance. In Odisha, institutions like DRDA, MISSION SAKTI, and NABARD provide training and financial support to promote microenterprises among women (Mohanty & Mohanty, 2013). Such efforts contribute to women's empowerment and regional socio-economic growth (Senapati & Ojha, 2019). Tribal women's empowerment is facilitated through increased educational and financial support (Klimczuk-Kochańska et al., 2023). SHGs promote collective empowerment and combat marginalization (Dash, 2024). Programs offering start-up finance and improved sanitation further strengthen micro-entrepreneurial engagement (Saha-Chaudhuri, 2024). Encouraging women to join SHGs and connect with banks facilitates sustainable ventures (Mishra & Mishra, 2024). While bibliometric studies have identified trends in women entrepreneurship (Marín-Palacios, 2023; Fayaz et al., 2022), there is a gap in research specifically linking micro-entrepreneurship and empowerment. Micro-entrepreneurship promotes financial inclusion and stability, helping women overcome patriarchal barriers with institutional support

(Qazi & Rashidi, 2018). However, informal sector barriers and financial illiteracy limit the benefits of financial inclusion (Fareed et al., 2017; Vong et al., 2014). Education is a critical enabler of entrepreneurial performance (Raspati & Kadiyono, 2023). Microenterprises improve livelihoods, self-esteem, autonomy, and decision-making, especially when supported by government resources (Feyisa & Tamene, 2019). Microfinance components like micro-credit, savings, insurance, and training enable new venture creation and social mobility (Hameed et al., 2021). Micro-enterprises contribute to women's empowerment through employment, income, skills, and decision-making capabilities (Jacob & Munuswamy, 2022).

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively **examine the volume, trends, and patterns of academic publications** related to the field of micro-entrepreneurship and women empowerment. By conducting a detailed bibliometric assessment, the study aims to trace the chronological development of research output, identify growth trajectories, and highlight the evolution of scholarly attention within this interdisciplinary domain over time. Furthermore, the research seeks to **analyze the authorship structures, institutional affiliations, and key sources of publication**, including the most influential journals and contributors shaping the discourse on women's empowerment through micro-entrepreneurship. Particular attention is given to uncovering **thematic clusters and research networks** that define the intellectual structure of the field, enabling a clearer understanding of the collaboration patterns, dominant research themes, and emerging areas of inquiry that have collectively advanced knowledge in this area.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis represents a systematic and quantitative method for evaluating the structure, dynamics, and intellectual development of scholarly literature within a defined research domain. It employs statistical and computational techniques to examine patterns of authorship, publication productivity, institutional affiliations, collaborative networks, citation distributions, and keyword co-occurrences across a comprehensive body of academic works. By quantifying these aspects, bibliometric analysis enables the identification of temporal research trends, prominent authors, influential journals, and leading institutions, as well as the assessment of the overall scholarly impact of research outputs. Furthermore, it provides a robust framework for mapping the intellectual landscape of a discipline and tracing the evolution of key research themes. This methodological approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the generation, dissemination, and transformation of knowledge, thereby supporting evidence-based policymaking and strategic decision-making in academia, research management, and funding agencies. It is widely recognized as a valuable tool across various domains—including the social sciences, humanities, and science and technology—for elucidating patterns of academic communication and scientific collaboration.

In the present study, bibliometric data were extracted from the Scopus database covering the period from 1989 to 2025. A total of 1,056 English-language publications pertinent to the research area were retrieved for analysis. The search strategy incorporated the keywords "microentrepreneurship," "women empowerment," "women entrepreneur," "self-help groups (SHGs)," and "bibliometric analysis" to ensure comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature. The retrieved data were exported in CSV format and subsequently processed using the VOSviewer software package. This software facilitated the visualization and exploration of bibliometric networks, including co-authorship linkages, citation relationships, and keyword co-occurrence patterns. The analysis provided valuable insights into the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research frontiers within the field of women's microentrepreneurship and empowerment, thereby contributing to a systematic understanding of its scholarly development and knowledge dissemination patterns over time.

## 5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1. Co-authorship Network Map

The co-authorship network (**Figure-1**) visualized through VOSviewer reveals distinct clusters of collaboration among researchers, highlighting the structure and strength of academic partnerships in the field. The **red cluster** includes prominent researchers such as *Hazel Malapit, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Jessica Heckert, Elena M. Martinez, Greg Seymour,* and *Audrey Pereira*. This is a densely connected cluster, showing strong internal collaboration. These authors frequently co-publish with one another, suggesting a tightly-knit research group.

The **green cluster** includes authors such as *Amber Peterman, Shalini Roy, Melissa Hidrobo, and Meghna Ranganathan.* While slightly more dispersed, this group also displays robust internal collaboration. Notably, *Amber Peterman* and *Shalini Roy* function as **bridging authors** between clusters, connecting the green and red groups, and suggesting active participation in interdisciplinary or cross-institutional research networks. This bridging role enhances the flow of ideas across different thematic or institutional boundaries and is crucial for knowledge dissemination.

Furthermore, the diversity of names across clusters suggests a significant degree of **international collaboration**, with authors likely based in different countries or institutions. This global co-authorship pattern underscores the interdisciplinary and cross-regional nature of the research domain.

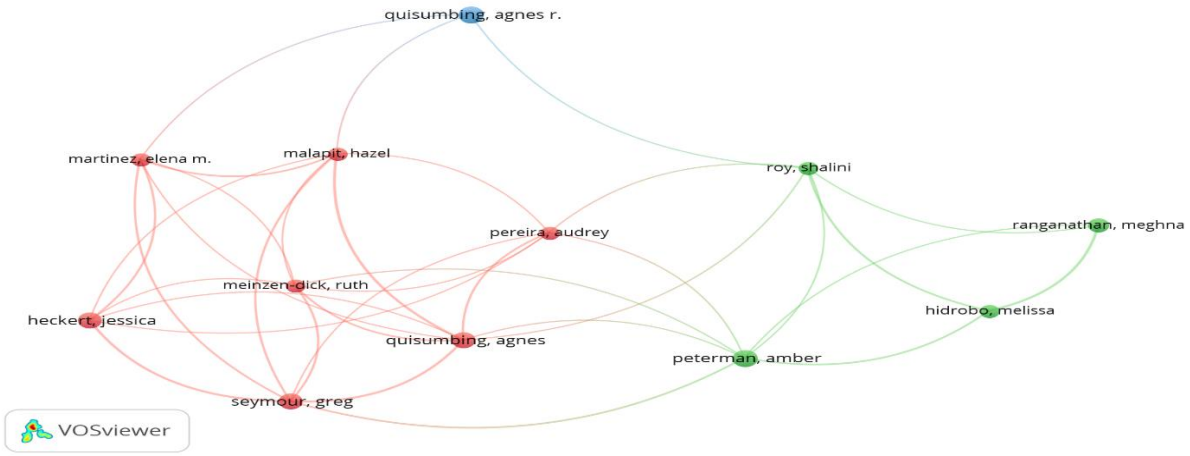


**Figure-1: Co-authorship Network Map**

### 5.2. Co-occurrence and All keywords Network Map

Co-occurrences are when two keywords show up together in an article, suggesting that the two ideas are related. Five thresholds are used as the minimum of occurrences. As a result, we identified 13 clusters from 197 keywords that satisfy the criterion, as seen in the **Figure-2**. The keyword co-occurrence network reveals a rich thematic structure of the literature surrounding empowerment, with particular focus on women's empowerment, health, socio-economic development, and micro-entrepreneurship.

The dominant and most cohesive cluster represented by the red colour (n = 76), emphasizes themes related to **economic empowerment and development**. Key terms include *"microfinance," "sustainability," "local participation," "poverty alleviation," "economic development," "autonomy," "civil society,"* and *"entrepreneurship."* This suggests a focus on structural and financial avenues for women's empowerment, particularly in developing contexts.

The **green cluster** centers on health and reproductive rights, highlighting terms like *mental health*, *sexual health*, and *women's rights*. The **blue cluster** emphasizes nutrition and agriculture with keywords such as *malnutrition* and *food security*. The **orange cluster** explores social change and inter-sectionality through terms like *social media* and *power*. The **purple cluster** focuses on political participation and civic engagement, with keywords like *citizenship* and *democracy*.

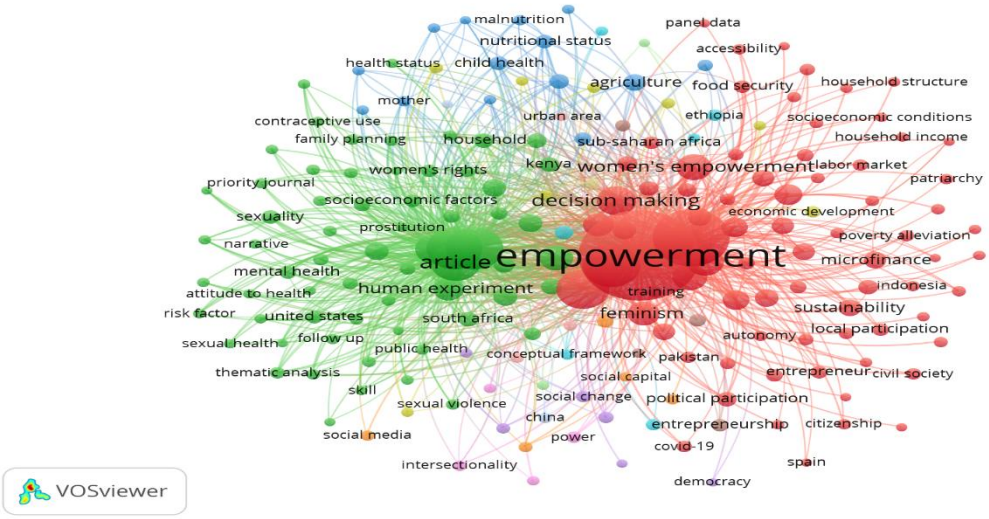


**Figure-2: Co-occurrence and all keywords network**

### 5.3. Bibliographic Coupling with documents

The bibliographic coupling map (**Figure-3)** illustrates the intellectual structure of the field by identifying key scholarly works that are frequently cited together. The size of each node represents the citation strength of an author's work, while proximity between nodes indicates the degree of shared references, i.e., thematic or conceptual similarity.

At the center of the map are highly influential authors such as Alkire (2013) and Vyas (2009), both of whom have significantly shaped the discourse on multidimensional poverty, empowerment measurement, and well-being. Their central position and large node size reflect their foundational role in the literature. Closely connected are works by Chant (2016), Fisher (2017), Broockman (2014), and Calkin (2015), which contribute to the themes of feminist economics, gendered development, and empowerment frameworks.

Other notable contributors include Sovacool (2018) and Biradavolu (2009), suggesting growing intersections between energy justice, development, and gender empowerment. Emerging and context-specific perspectives are visible through the inclusion of recent studies such as Akbar (2023), Connors (2021), Heo (2022), and Adbi (2021), indicating the field's responsiveness to contemporary global shifts and regional narratives.

Peripheral authors such as Radović-Marković (2019) and Kabir (2019) appear more isolated, reflecting either niche specialization or lower integration into the mainstream citation network. The color coding of clusters signifies thematic groups, revealing multi-disciplinary engagement across development studies, public policy, gender studies, and social justice.

This bibliographic coupling analysis underscores the dominance of certain theoretical frameworks while also highlighting the emergence of new voices, suggesting a dynamic and evolving field ripe for further interdisciplinary exploration.

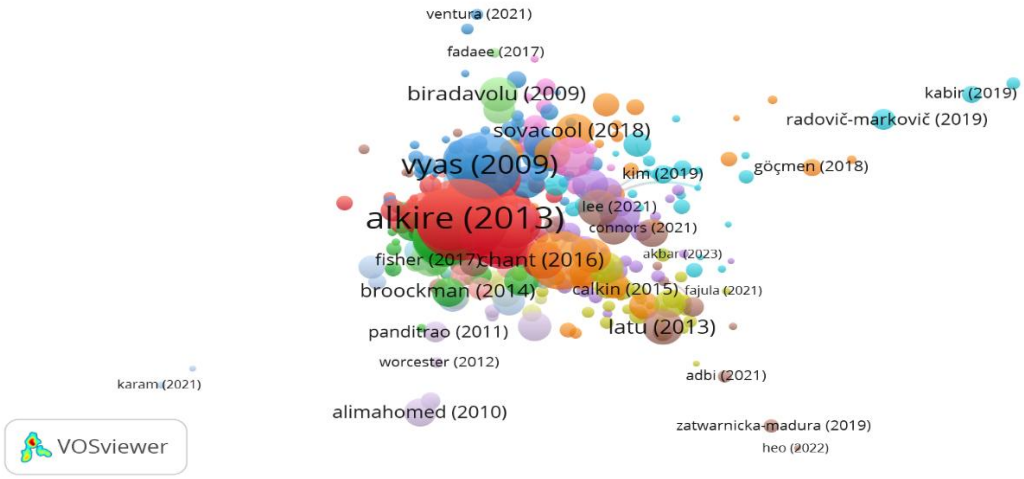


**Figure-3: Bibliographic Coupling of documents**

### 5.4. Bibliographic Coupling with Sources

The source coupling map (**Figure-4**) reveals that journals like *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *Social Science and Medicine*, and *IDS Bulletin* are central to the literature on empowerment and development, indicating their strong influence and interdisciplinary reach. Development-focused journals such as the *Journal of Development Economics* and *Development in Practice* cluster around economic and sustainability issues, while **gender-oriented journals** like *Women's Studies International*, *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, *and Violence Against Women* reflect thematic focus on gender, health, and intersectionality. Peripheral sources like *Asian Social Science* and *Journal of Rural Development* suggest more specialized or regional contributions. Overall, the map highlights a rich interdisciplinary dialogue across development, gender studies, and public health.

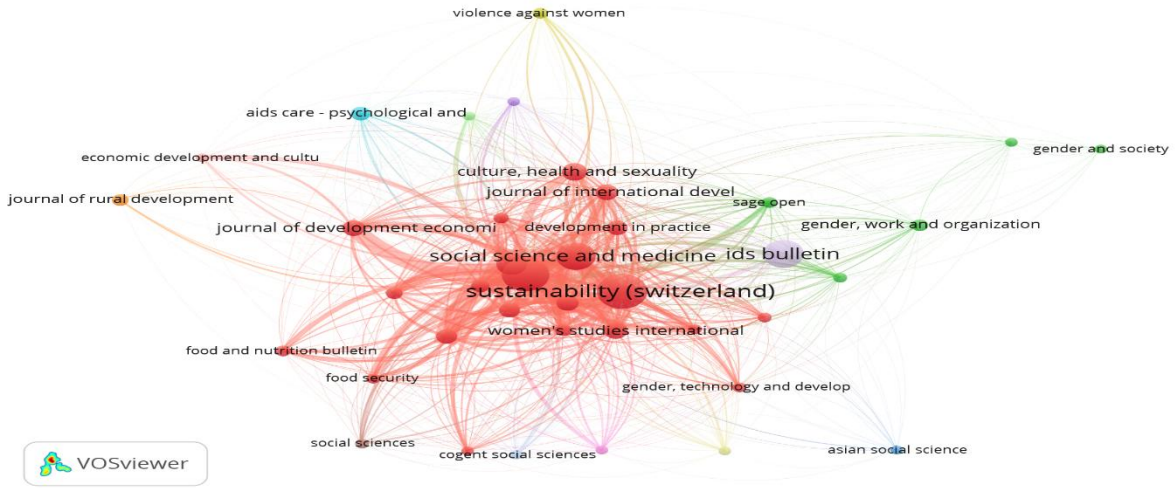


**Figure-4: Bibliographic Coupling of sources**

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global research on micro-entrepreneurship and women empowerment, offering an in-depth understanding of the field's intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research dynamics. The findings demonstrate that the domain has experienced steady growth over the past three decades, supported by increasing scholarly collaboration and the convergence of multidisciplinary perspectives from economics, gender studies, management, and social development. The visualization and network analyses

reveal strong patterns of international and institutional collaboration, signifying the global recognition of women's micro-entrepreneurship as a critical driver of inclusive economic development.

The thematic clustering highlights three dominant dimensions—economic empowerment, social empowerment, and health and well-being—which together form the conceptual foundation of this research area. Economic empowerment remains the most extensively explored theme, focusing on income generation, access to finance, and entrepreneurial capacity-building, while social empowerment emphasizes collective participation, social capital formation, and the strengthening of community-based networks such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Additionally, growing attention is being directed toward the intersections between entrepreneurship, gender equality, and sustainable development, particularly in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite its expansion, the field still exhibits notable research gaps and regional imbalances. Much of the existing literature is concentrated in South and Southeast Asia, whereas limited empirical evidence is available from Africa, Latin America, and other developing regions. Moreover, emerging areas such as digital and technology-enabled entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystems, and post-pandemic resilience strategies for women-led enterprises remain underexplored. Addressing these gaps through comparative and cross-regional studies will be crucial for advancing both theoretical and practical understanding.

Overall, this study contributes to the systematic mapping of the knowledge base surrounding micro-entrepreneurship and women empowerment. By identifying the intellectual frontiers, collaborative networks, and evolving research priorities, the analysis provides a robust foundation for guiding future research, policymaking, and program design. The insights derived underscore the transformative potential of micro-entrepreneurship as a strategic instrument for achieving inclusive, equitable, and gender-responsive development in the global context.

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