“Gendering Entrepreneurial Resilience: Exploring the Growth and Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs – The Case of Nepal”

Module: Advancing to Doctoral Research Stage
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My Research Title

Gendering Entrepreneurial Resilience: Exploring the Growth and Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs – The Case of Nepal.

This study focuses on *gendering entrepreneurial resilience* by examining how women entrepreneurs in Nepal navigate growth opportunities and challenges within gendered socio-cultural contexts. It highlights how resilience is shaped not only by individual capabilities but also by social norms, institutions, and support systems. By situating entrepreneurship within a feminist perspective, the study aims to move beyond gender-neutral models and capture women's lived entrepreneurial realities.

Background and Context – Definition

Ayala & Manzano (2014) define resilience as a dynamic capability that enables entrepreneurs to adapt, recover, and innovate despite adversity.

Calás, Smircich & Bourne (2009) highlight that women's entrepreneurial experiences are embedded within gendered structures, patriarchal norms, and social expectations.

Nepal's unique socio-cultural context with patriarchal norms and expanding women-led enterprises—provides an ideal setting to study gendered resilience (Acharya & Bennett, 1981).

Women own about 28% of MSMEs in Nepal (Bryazka et al., 2022).

Growth sectors include handicrafts, agriculture, hospitality, beauty services, retail, and digital commerce.

Despite constraints, Nepali women continue to show strong entrepreneurial resilience through community networks, self-learning, and microfinance support (Manandhar, 2022).

Problem Statement

Global research has not adequately explored gendered entrepreneurial resilience (Henry et al., 2016).

Nepal's Research Gap:
Despite rising women-led businesses (FNCCI, 2023).

Limited research on how Nepali women develop resilience.

Most studies treat entrepreneurship as gender-neutral (Ahl, 2006).

Underrepresentation of social norms, unpaid care work, and mobility challenges (Bhatta, 2022).

Minimal empirical work integrating feminist theory and resilience frameworks.

Need to produce Nepal-specific empirical evidence for empowerment policies.

Despite the growth of women-led enterprises in Nepal, empirical research on gendered entrepreneurial resilience remains limited. Most existing studies adopt gender-neutral approaches and overlook unpaid care work, mobility restrictions, and patriarchal norms (Ahl, 2006; Henry et al., 2016; Bhatta, 2022).

❖ This gap restricts development of stronger women-focused entrepreneurial support systems.

Rationale

Nepal's women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to household and community well-being (UN Women, 2022)

However,

- Patriarchal norms restrict mobility and agency (Acharya & Bennett, 1981).
- Financial exclusion persists despite growth of microfinance (NRB, 2022).
- Digital transformation creates new avenues but with unequal access (World Bank, 2023).
- Resilience-building strategies remain understudied.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating feminist and resilience lenses.

Literature Review – Growth Opportunities

- **Economic Empowerment**

Women entrepreneurs contribute directly to employment generation and household income (ILO, 2021).

- **Microfinance and Training**

Microfinance improves financial independence and entrepreneurial competence (Kabeer, 2001).

- **Social Capital**

Women rely heavily on family support, cooperatives, and community groups to build resilience (Coleman, 1988).

- **Digital & Home-Based Entrepreneurship**

Digital platforms have enabled flexible, low-cost business models for Nepali women (Sharma & KC, 2023).

Literature Review – Gendered Challenges

❖ **Patriarchal Norms**

Restrictive gender norms limit decision-making and mobility (Samandar & Wardak, 2025; Hatano, 2021).

❖ **Unpaid Care Work**

- Double workload reduces women's entrepreneurial productivity (Moi & Onditi, 2025).

❖ **Financial Barriers**

Women face collateral problems, limited documentation, and credit discrimination (Nepal, 2023).

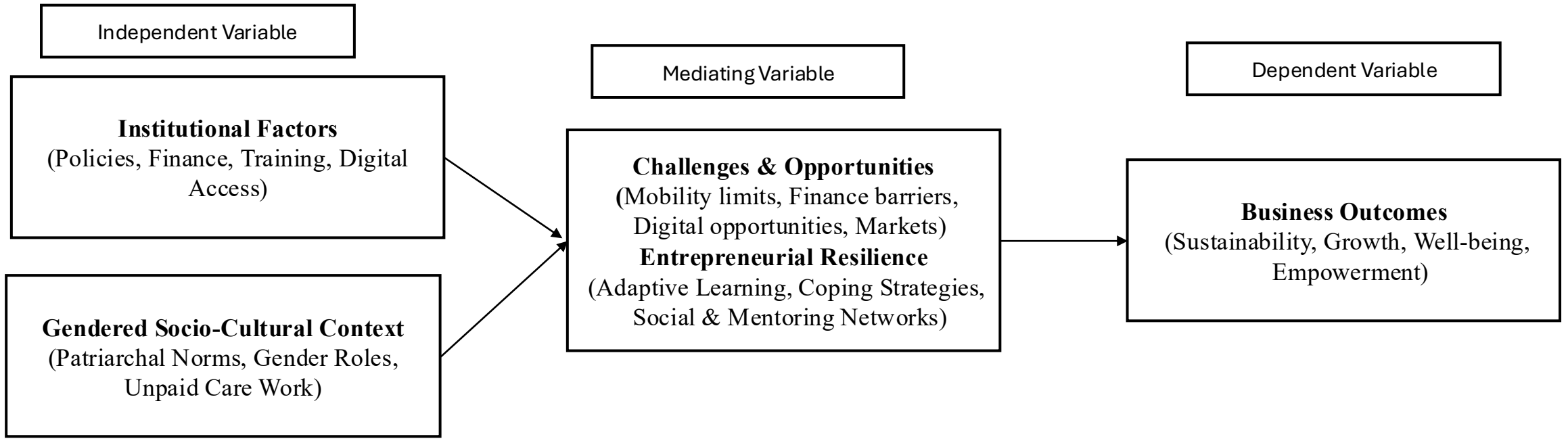
❖ **Market & Network Barriers**

Limited access to professional networks and technology (Bhatta, 2022).

Resilience Strategies

- Women entrepreneurs develop resilience through social capital, family support, and collective action (Bagheri et al., 2023).
- Adaptive learning, digital engagement, and informal mentoring networks play a crucial role in sustaining women-led businesses (Ahmed et al., 2025).

Conceptual Framework



Key Stakeholders

- Women entrepreneurs
- Family members and community networks
- Microfinance institutions and banks
- Government agencies and policy makers
- NGOs and women entrepreneurship support organizations
- Business associations (e.g., FNCCI)

Research Aim

To explore gendered dimensions of entrepreneurial resilience among women entrepreneurs in Nepal and identify the factors shaping their growth, challenges, and coping strategies.

Research Questions

Primary Question:

1. How do women entrepreneurs in Nepal cultivate and sustain entrepreneurial resilience in gendered socio-cultural environments?

Sub-questions:

1. What opportunities drive women's engagement in entrepreneurship?
2. What gendered challenges do they face?
3. What resilience strategies do they employ?
4. How do networks, families, and institutions shape resilience?
5. What interventions can strengthen women's entrepreneurial resilience?

Theoretical Framework

- **Feminist Theory (Calás et al., 2009)**

Explains how power, gender norms, and inequality influence women's entrepreneurial lives.

- **Entrepreneurial Resilience Theory (Ayala & Manzano, 2014)**

Focuses on adaptive strategies during stress and uncertainty.

- **Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988)**

Emphasizes networks, trust, and community cooperation.

- **Institutional Theory (Scott, 2005)**

Analyzes how formal and informal institutions shape women's entrepreneurship.

Theoretical Integration

Theory	What It Explains	Why It Matters for My Study
Feminist Theory	Gender norms, patriarchy	Shows structural barriers shaping resilience
Resilience Theory	Adaptive capability	Explains coping strategies during crises
Social Capital Theory	Networks, trust	Highlights support systems building resilience
Institutional Theory	Rules, policies	Examines how institutions enable/limit women

Methodology

Research Design: Mixed-Methods

Combines qualitative depth with quantitative generalizability.

Quantitative Component:

• Survey of 200–250 women entrepreneurs

• Variables: resilience, finance, networks, norms, business outcomes

Qualitative Component:

• 25–30 in-depth semi-structured interviews

• Participants: Entrepreneurs, NGOs, microfinance representatives

Sampling: Purposive + Snowball

Analysis:

Quantitative: Descriptive + Regression/SEM

Qualitative: Thematic analysis

Kuhn’s Paradigm Theory – A New Lens

Thomas Kuhn (1962) argues that science progresses through paradigm shifts rather than gradual accumulation.

In entrepreneurship research:

- Traditional models treat entrepreneurship as universal and gender-neutral (Ahl, 2006).
- Feminist scholarship highlights the need to shift toward gender-aware frameworks (Marlow & Dy, 2017)

My research represents a paradigm shift toward gendered, contextual, socially embedded entrepreneurship.

How Paradigms Guide Research

- **Traditional Paradigm (Positivist):** Focus on economic indicators, assumes neutrality and prefers quantitative, generalizable models
- **My Paradigm (Feminist + Pragmatic):** Recognizes gendered power dynamics, values lived experience, uses mixed-methods and prioritizes context, voices, and agency.

This aligns with Kuhn’s view that anomalies trigger new scientific worldviews.

Paradigm Comparison

Traditional Paradigm (Positivist)	Gendered/Pragmatic Paradigm (My Study)
Assumes neutrality	Recognizes gender as structural factor
Focuses on economic outcomes	Focuses on social, emotional & relational resilience
Uses generic entrepreneurial models	Uses feminist-informed resilience models
Prefers quant-only	Mixed methods with qualitative emphasis
Western-centric	Nepal-specific contextual understanding

Crisis in Current Women Entrepreneurship Models

Problem Area	Explanation of Crisis	My Research Response	References
Patriarchal Norms	Restrict mobility and decision-making	Apply feminist theory to analyse gendered constraints	Acharya & Bennett (1981)
Financial Exclusion	Collateral & bias limit loans	Examine institutional barriers	NRB (2022)
Limited Networks	Women lack strong professional linkages	Social capital lens	Coleman (1988)
Methodological Gaps	Prior studies lack gendered resilience analysis	Mixed-methods design	Creswell & Creswell (2018)
Digital Divide	Limits online business potential	Assess tech-access barriers	Sharma & KC (2023)

Shared Outlooks and Worldviews

- **Traditional Worldview**

Entrepreneurship = individual economic activity

Success measured through profit and growth

- **New Worldview (My Research)**

Entrepreneurship = socially embedded practice

Resilience shaped by gender norms, relationships, and cultural expectations

Knowledge must be context-sensitive and inclusive (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

Paradigm Shift – A New Model for Research

From: Gender-neutral, individualistic, performance-based models
To: Gender-aware, relational, resilience-based frameworks.

Justification:

- Women's entrepreneurship in Nepal is shaped by patriarchy, mobility constraints, and household responsibilities (Bhatta, 2022).
- Existing models cannot explain these complexities.

Paradigm Shift – New Research Model

From Old Paradigm	To New Paradigm (My Study)	Justification
Individual focus	Community & family-influenced resilience	Reflects Nepali context
Gender-neutral	Gender-sensitive	Patriarchy shapes enterprise
One-theory models	Integrated 4-theory cluster	Multi-dimensional issues
Economic indicators	Lived experiences & agency	More holistic
Western models	Nepal-specific contextual model	Cultural relevance

How the Paradigm Shift Leads to My Research Design

Design Elements Reflecting Paradigm Shift:

- Mixed-methods to capture multiple realities (Creswell, 1994)
- Feminist lens to highlight voice and agency
- Social capital focus for community-based resilience
- Contextualization for Nepal’s socio-cultural setting

Ontology, Epistemology & Methodology

- **Ontology:** Reality is socially constructed; women experience entrepreneurship differently due to gender norms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).
- **Epistemology:** Knowledge is co-created through narratives, interactions, and lived experiences.
- **Methodology:** Pragmatic mixed-methods—flexible, context-driven, problem-solving oriented.

Reflection on My Research Journey

- Initially relied on traditional, positivist entrepreneurship models.
- Exposure to Kuhn shifted my thinking toward paradigm diversity.
- Realized the importance of integrating feminist theory to uncover hidden gender dynamics.
- Now grounded in a feminist-pragmatic paradigm that values lived realities and social context.

Ethical Considerations and Data Protection

- Ethical considerations include informed consent, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the study.
- Participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be securely stored and used solely for academic purposes, with cultural sensitivity maintained throughout the research process.

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