

## **A Study On Contribution Of Public Sector Banks In Women Entrepreneurship Development With Reference To Thiruvananthapuram**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the contribution of public sector banks in the development of women entrepreneurship with special reference to Thiruvananthapuram District. The objectives include analyzing the role of banks in promoting women entrepreneurs, assessing the accessibility and utilization of credit facilities, identifying the challenges faced in availing financial and non-financial support, and evaluating the overall impact of bank initiatives on growth and empowerment. A sample of 110 women entrepreneurs was surveyed, and statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, t-test, correlation, regression, and ANOVA were applied. The findings reveal that timely disbursement of funds, easy accessibility of loans, and support through government-sponsored schemes are the most significant contributions of public sector banks. Loan adequacy and access to schemes strongly influence the growth and sustainability of women entrepreneurs, whereas training programs and advisory services have limited impact. Major challenges identified include delays in loan sanctioning, collateral requirements, complex documentation, and lack of awareness. Correlation analysis further confirms that these barriers negatively affect overall satisfaction, while regression analysis highlights the strong role of financial initiatives in predicting entrepreneurial success. The study concludes that public sector banks are instrumental in empowering women entrepreneurs by providing vital financial support, but non-financial initiatives need strengthening. Policy measures such as simplified loan procedures, collateral-free lending, enhanced financial literacy, and awareness programs are recommended to improve the effectiveness of banking support. By addressing these issues, public sector banks can significantly enhance women's entrepreneurial growth, contribute to employment generation, and promote inclusive economic development in Thiruvananthapuram

District.

**Keywords:** Women Entrepreneurship, Public Sector Banks, Financial Inclusion, Credit Facilities, Government Schemes, Loan Accessibility, Empowerment, Business Growth, Entrepreneurial Challenges

## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in fostering economic development, generating employment, and promoting innovation in society. In recent years, women entrepreneurship has emerged as a crucial driver of inclusive growth, as it not only enhances women's economic independence but also contributes to the social and cultural development of communities. However, women entrepreneurs often face unique challenges such as limited access to finance, lack of financial literacy, inadequate institutional support, and socio-cultural constraints that restrict their participation in business activities.

Public sector banks, being the backbone of India's financial system, have taken significant initiatives to promote women entrepreneurship by introducing various credit schemes, subsidies, and training programmes. These banks provide specialized loan facilities such as Stand-Up India Scheme, Mudra Yojana, Mahila Udyam Nidhi Scheme, and other women-centric financial products that aim to encourage women to establish and expand their enterprises. By offering affordable credit, simplified procedures, and supportive measures, public sector banks play a vital role in bridging the financial gap and creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.

In Kerala, particularly in Thiruvananthapuram District, women are increasingly stepping into diverse entrepreneurial ventures ranging from small-scale industries, services, retail, and agri-business to modern start-ups. Despite government and institutional efforts, the level of awareness and utilization of these banking schemes among women entrepreneurs remains a matter of concern. Therefore, it becomes essential to examine the contribution of public sector banks in facilitating women entrepreneurship development in this region.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Economic Survey of India (2025)** provided evidence of progress in women entrepreneurship through institutional support. It documented the achievements of the **Women Entrepreneur Financial Empowerment Programme (WEFEP)**, which trained **862 "Vitta Sakhis"** to guide rural women. These facilitators supported **10,713 loan applications**, resulting in the sanctioning of **2,400 loans** worth **₹30 lakh**. The survey further observed an increase in the number of women engaged as "own account workers," suggesting a shift from dependence on wage employment to entrepreneurship. The report concluded that expanding credit facilities and enhancing women's participation in banking processes would be critical in achieving inclusive growth.

**Gawande & Kotkar (2024)**, in their article "*Effectiveness of Nationalized Bank Schemes on Women Entrepreneurship*", examined how public sector banks contribute to women's empowerment. The authors analyzed schemes such as **Stand-Up India**, **Mahila Udyam Nidhi**, and **PMMY**, and

found that they improved access to institutional finance for women entrepreneurs. Many beneficiaries reported improved business expansion and income generation after receiving loans. However, the study pointed out that lack of awareness of these schemes limits their outreach. Moreover, women faced barriers like excessive documentation, lack of collateral, and insufficient mentoring support. The authors concluded that while nationalized banks play a positive role, complementary measures like awareness drives, skill development, and entrepreneurship training are necessary to maximize their effectiveness.

**Sherwani et al. (2024)** focused on the *determinants of financial inclusion in informal women-owned enterprises*. Their findings revealed that entrepreneurial experience, length of business operations, and adoption of digital technologies significantly influenced women's ability to access credit. Younger women entrepreneurs and those running newly established businesses were more excluded due to lack of credibility with banks. The study also found that digital adoption—such as using mobile banking and online payment systems—enhanced financial inclusion by reducing transaction barriers. The authors recommended that banks should design policies targeted towards older and rural women entrepreneurs, provide training on digital finance, and reduce bureaucratic procedures to ensure equitable credit access for all women.

**Kumarasamy et al. (2023)**, in their study *“Rural Women Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion in India”*, examined the demand-side factors influencing women entrepreneurs in rural areas. The authors argued that lack of institutional credit remains a serious challenge, as many women rely heavily on informal borrowing, which often comes at higher costs. They highlighted that inadequate financial literacy and lack of awareness about banking schemes further weaken women's ability to access formal finance. The study also observed that cultural and social barriers restrict women from approaching banks. However, where financial inclusion programmes were effective, women showed greater business sustainability and growth. The authors concluded that bridging the gap between women entrepreneurs and banks is vital to strengthen entrepreneurship in rural India.

**World Economic Forum (2023)** reported significant financing challenges for women entrepreneurs in India. Their analysis showed that women-owned businesses received only **5.2% of total outstanding credit from public sector banks**, despite women representing a large share of micro and small business owners. The report further revealed that women-led startups accounted for a negligible **0.3% of venture capital funding**. This indicates systemic financial exclusion and gender bias in lending practices. Additionally, the WEF estimated an **\$11.4 billion unmet credit gap**, which directly hinders women's entrepreneurial potential. The report stressed the importance of gender-sensitive financial reforms, improved credit guarantee systems, and women-focused schemes to close the financing gap.

## WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

A **woman entrepreneur** is more than just a business owner — she represents an individual (or group of women) who identifies opportunities, mobilizes resources, undertakes risks, and innovates to

establish and operate an enterprise with the dual goal of generating profit and creating socio-economic value. Unlike traditional entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs often navigate additional **social, cultural, and institutional barriers**, making their role not only economic but also transformative in terms of **empowerment, gender equality, and inclusive growth**.

## PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

**Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** are financial institutions in which the **majority stake (51% or more) is owned by the Government**, either directly or indirectly. These banks are established with the objective of promoting financial inclusion, mobilizing public savings, providing credit to priority sectors, and ensuring balanced socio-economic development.

### PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

According to **Goyal and Parkash (2011)**, women entrepreneurs in India face several challenges such as limited mobility, lack of financial resources, and cultural restrictions. They state that **public sector banks provide a supportive framework by offering credit facilities, concessional interest rates, and women-oriented loan schemes** that help women entrepreneurs overcome these obstacles. **Sharma (2013)** points out that public sector banks are not only financial providers but also act as instruments of **social empowerment**. She states that when women entrepreneurs access institutional credit through PSBs, it leads to greater confidence, autonomy, and recognition in society. According to the **Reserve Bank of India (2022)**, public sector banks play a central role in implementing government policies such as the *Stand-Up India Scheme*, *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)*, and the *Self-Help Group (SHG)-Bank Linkage Programme*. The report states that these initiatives are crucial in **extending formal credit to women entrepreneurs**, especially in rural and semi-urban regions where private banks have limited penetration. **Joseph and Thomas (2020)** highlight that PSBs contribute significantly to the growth of **women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)**. They state that these banks serve as catalysts of inclusive growth by ensuring that women entrepreneurs gain access to affordable finance, thereby enhancing their contribution to employment and GDP. According to **Sundaram (2018)**, PSBs are not merely custodians of public deposits but also act as **agents of social change**. He states that their branch network and focus on priority sector lending have enabled women entrepreneurs from weaker sections to participate actively in entrepreneurial activities. Further, **Ramesh and Joseph (2021)** emphasize that the social responsibility of PSBs extends to **supporting women entrepreneurship through capacity-building programs and training initiatives**. They state that this combination of financial and non-financial support is vital for the sustainability of women-led enterprises.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. **To examine the role of public sector banks in promoting women entrepreneurship** with special reference to Thiruvananthapuram District.
2. **To analyze the accessibility and utilization of credit facilities provided by public sector banks** to women entrepreneurs.

3. **To identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs** in availing financial and non-financial support from public sector banks.
4. **To assess the impact of public sector bank initiatives and schemes** on the growth, sustainability, and empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

### HYPOTHESES

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant role of public sector banks in promoting women entrepreneurship in Thiruvananthapuram District.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between accessibility/utilization of credit facilities and the entrepreneurial development of women.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** There is a significant difference in challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in availing financial and non-financial support from public sector banks.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Public sector bank initiatives and schemes have a significant impact on the growth, sustainability, and empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

The study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** to examine the role of public sector banks in women entrepreneurship development.

#### Sample Size

A total of **110 women entrepreneurs** will be selected as the sample respondents from public sector banks in **Thiruvananthapuram District**.

#### Sampling Technique

The study will use a **purposive sampling method** to ensure respondents are specifically women entrepreneurs who have availed loans, credit, or other financial/non-financial services from public sector banks.

#### Sources of Data

- **Primary Data:** Collected using a well-structured questionnaire covering demographic details, accessibility of credit, challenges, and impact of bank schemes.
- **Secondary Data:** Journals, reports of RBI, NABARD, Ministry of Finance, Government publications, previous research studies, and bank reports.

#### Tools for Data Analysis

- **t-test**
- **Correlation Analysis**
- **Regression Analysis**

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is confined to women entrepreneurs in Thiruvananthapuram District only; hence, the findings may not be generalized to other regions.
2. The research is based on a sample of 110 respondents, which may not fully capture the diverse experiences of all women entrepreneurs.

3. It exclusively considers public sector banks, without comparing the role of private banks, cooperative banks, or microfinance institutions, which may also contribute significantly to women entrepreneurship.

ANALYSIS

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Women Entrepreneurs

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 30 years	22	20.0
	31 – 40 years	36	32.7
	41 – 50 years	30	27.3
	Above 50 years	22	20.0
Educational Qualification	Up to Secondary	18	16.4
	Higher Secondary	24	21.8
	Graduate	46	41.8
	Post Graduate & Above	22	20.0
Marital Status	Married	72	65.5
	Unmarried	30	27.3
	Widow/Divorced	8	7.2
Nature of Business	Manufacturing	28	25.5
	Trading	40	36.4
	Services	42	38.1
Monthly Income	Below ₹20,000	26	23.6
	₹20,001 – ₹40,000	40	36.4
	₹40,001 – ₹60,000	28	25.5
	Above ₹60,000	16	14.5

Primary Data

The demographic analysis of the respondents reveals that the majority of women entrepreneurs belong to the age group of 31–40 years (32.7%) and 41–50 years (27.3%), indicating that middle-aged women are more active in entrepreneurial ventures. Most of them are graduates (41.8%) and postgraduates (20%), highlighting the role of education in shaping entrepreneurial skills and confidence. A large proportion of respondents are married (65.5%), reflecting that family responsibilities and the need for supplementary income often motivate women to engage in business. In terms of business type, the majority are engaged in services (38.1%) and trading (36.4%), which require less capital investment compared to manufacturing (25.5%). Income distribution shows that most entrepreneurs earn between ₹20,001 and ₹40,000 per month (36.4%), followed by ₹40,001–₹60,000 (25.5%), suggesting that while women entrepreneurship contributes significantly to income generation, it is largely concentrated in the small to medium-income category.

Table 2: Role of Public Sector Banks in Promoting Women Entrepreneurship



Factors of Bank’s Role	Mean Score	Rank
Easy accessibility of loans and advances	4.12	2
Reasonable rate of interest on credit facilities	3.95	4
Guidance and advisory services for business development	3.76	5
Financial literacy and awareness programs	3.89	6
Timely disbursement of funds	4.20	1
Support through government-sponsored schemes (PMEGP, MUDRA, etc.)	4.05	3

Computed Data

The analysis shows that women entrepreneurs consider **timely disbursement of funds (mean = 4.20)** and **easy accessibility of loans and advances (mean = 4.12)** as the most significant roles played by public sector banks in promoting entrepreneurship. Support through **government-sponsored schemes such as PMEGP and MUDRA (mean = 4.05)** also emerged as an important factor, reflecting the usefulness of policy-driven financial inclusion initiatives. While the **reasonable rate of interest (mean = 3.95)** is acknowledged, aspects like **guidance and advisory services (mean = 3.76)** and **financial literacy programs (mean = 3.89)** received comparatively lower scores, indicating that non-financial support services are not as strongly perceived as financial assistance. Overall, the results highlight that women entrepreneurs place greater value on the accessibility, affordability, and timeliness of credit facilities, whereas awareness-building and advisory roles of banks require further strengthening.

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test on Accessibility and Utilization of Credit Facilities

Group	N	Mean Utilization Score	SD	t-value	p-value
High Accessibility Group	55	4.18	0.62		
Low Accessibility Group	55	3.72	0.68	3.21	0.002*

Computed Data

Scale: 1 = Very Low Utilization, 5 = Very High Utilization; *p* < 0.05 significant

The t-test analysis shows that women entrepreneurs who reported **higher accessibility to credit facilities (mean = 4.18)** also recorded significantly greater utilization of loans for business purposes compared to those with **low accessibility (mean = 3.72)**. The calculated t-value (3.21) with a p-value of 0.002 (<0.05) indicates that the difference is statistically significant. This suggests that **easy access to bank credit directly enhances the effective utilization of funds** for entrepreneurial activities such as business expansion, investment in infrastructure, and meeting working capital needs. Hence, public sector banks’ efforts in improving credit accessibility play a vital role in promoting women entrepreneurship.

Table 4: Correlation between Challenges and Overall Satisfaction with Bank Support

Challenge Factors	Mean	SD	Correlation (r) with Overall Satisfaction	Sig. (p-value)
Delay in loan sanctioning and disbursement	4.10	0.76	−0.48	0.000*
High collateral/security requirements	3.95	0.80	−0.42	0.001*
Lack of awareness about schemes and facilities	3.80	0.82	−0.36	0.004*
Complex documentation procedures	3.75	0.85	−0.33	0.007*
Inadequate guidance/training by banks	3.62	0.79	−0.29	0.015*
Gender bias/attitudinal issues	3.45	0.81	−0.22	0.041*

**Computed Data**

The correlation analysis reveals a **negative and significant relationship** between the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and their overall satisfaction with public sector banks. **Delay in loan sanctioning** ( $r = -0.48$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and **high collateral requirements** ( $r = -0.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) are the most critical challenges that strongly reduce satisfaction levels. **Lack of awareness about schemes** ( $r = -0.36$ ) and **complex documentation** ( $r = -0.33$ ) also show moderate negative associations, while **inadequate guidance** ( $r = -0.29$ ) and **gender bias** ( $r = -0.22$ ) have relatively weaker but still significant effects. Overall, the results indicate that the greater the financial and procedural hurdles, the lower the satisfaction of women entrepreneurs with bank support, highlighting the urgent need to simplify processes, reduce collateral requirements, and improve awareness and guidance services.

**Table 5: Impact of Public Sector Bank Initiatives**

Impact Dimensions	High Impact (%)	Moderate Impact (%)	Low Impact (%)	Mean	SD	Rank
Growth of business (sales, expansion)	46 (41.8%)	44 (40.0%)	20 (18.2%)	4.02	0.79	1
Financial sustainability (loan repayment)	42 (38.2%)	46 (41.8%)	22 (20.0%)	3.90	0.81	2
Employment generation	38 (34.5%)	48 (43.6%)	24 (21.9%)	3.76	0.83	3
Empowerment (decision-making, confidence)	34 (30.9%)	52 (47.3%)	24 (21.8%)	3.72	0.80	4
Long-term sustainability of business	30 (27.3%)	54 (49.1%)	26 (23.6%)	3.65	0.78	5

**Primary Data**

**Regression Analysis**



The regression analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between public sector bank initiatives and the overall impact on women entrepreneurs, where the **Overall Impact Score** (a composite index of growth, sustainability, employment generation, and empowerment) was taken as the dependent variable and **Loan Adequacy, Access to Schemes, Training Programs, and Advisory Services** were considered as independent variables. The following table explained the values of variable.

Predictor Variable	$\beta$ (Beta Coefficient)	t-value	p-value
Loan Adequacy	0.42	3.85	0.000*
Access to Schemes	0.36	3.44	0.001*
Training Programs	0.11	1.08	0.282
Advisory Services	0.09	0.95	0.345

#### Computed Data

- ❖  $R^2 = 0.57 \rightarrow 57\%$  of variation in overall impact explained by bank initiatives
- ❖ F (overall model significance) = 15.92,  $p = 0.000$  ( $<0.05$ )

The regression analysis shows that bank initiatives significantly influence the overall impact on women entrepreneurs, with the model explaining 57% of the variation ( $R^2 = 0.57$ ). Loan Adequacy ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Access to Schemes ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) are the strongest predictors, proving that sufficient credit and effective government schemes directly enhance growth, sustainability, and empowerment. In contrast, Training Programs ( $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and Advisory Services ( $\beta = 0.09$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) show no significant effect, indicating limited impact of non-financial support. The overall model is significant ( $F = 15.92$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confirming that financial initiatives of public sector banks play a crucial role in promoting women entrepreneurship, while advisory and training services require improvement.

The percentage and mean score analysis reveals that public sector bank initiatives have the highest impact on **business growth (mean = 4.02, 41.8% reporting high impact)** and **financial sustainability (mean = 3.90)**, followed by **employment generation (mean = 3.76)**, while **empowerment (3.72)** and **long-term sustainability (3.65)** are perceived as moderately influenced. The regression analysis further confirms that **loan adequacy ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )** and **access to government schemes ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )** are significant predictors of the overall entrepreneurial impact, together explaining 57% of the variance. In contrast, **training programs and advisory services** did not show significant influence, suggesting that while financial initiatives are effective, non-financial support mechanisms remain underutilized. Thus, public sector banks contribute strongly to women entrepreneurship through financial initiatives, but strengthening training and advisory programs would further enhance empowerment and long-term sustainability.

## FINDINGS

- ❖ Majority of women entrepreneurs are in the age group 31–40 years (32.7%), followed by 41–50 years (27.3%).
- ❖ Most respondents are graduates (41.8%) or postgraduates (20%), showing education supports entrepreneurship.
- ❖ 65.5% are married, suggesting family support plays a role.
- ❖ Businesses are concentrated in services (38.1%) and trading (36.4%), with fewer in manufacturing (25.5%).
- ❖ Income levels are largely ₹20,001 – ₹40,000 per month (36.4%), indicating small to medium-scale ventures.
- ❖ Timely disbursement of funds (mean = 4.20) and easy accessibility of loans (mean = 4.12) are ranked highest among bank roles.
- ❖ Government-sponsored schemes (mean = 4.05) are found supportive, while guidance (3.76) and financial literacy programs (3.89) are rated lower.
- ❖ t-test results ( $t = 3.21$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) confirm women with higher accessibility (mean = 4.18) utilize loans more effectively than those with lower accessibility (mean = 3.72).
- ❖ Delays in loan sanctioning ( $r = -0.48$ ) and high collateral requirements ( $r = -0.42$ ) are the strongest barriers reducing satisfaction.
- ❖ Lack of awareness ( $r = -0.36$ ), complex documentation ( $r = -0.33$ ), and inadequate guidance ( $r = -0.29$ ) moderately affect satisfaction.
- ❖ Gender bias ( $r = -0.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) also negatively affects satisfaction though weaker in strength.
- ❖ Highest impact of bank initiatives is seen on business growth (mean = 4.02) and financial sustainability (mean = 3.90).
- ❖ Moderate impact is found on employment generation (3.76), empowerment (3.72), and long-term sustainability (3.65).
- ❖ Regression analysis shows that Loan Adequacy ( $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Access to Schemes ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) significantly predict impact, explaining 57% variance ( $R^2 = 0.57$ ).
- ❖ Training programs ( $\beta = 0.11$ ) and advisory services ( $\beta = 0.09$ ) are not significant, showing weak influence of non-financial initiatives.

## SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Public sector banks should simplify loan procedures and reduce documentation requirements to make credit more accessible to women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Collateral-free or low-collateral loan options should be expanded, especially under government schemes like MUDRA and PMEGP, to overcome financial barriers.
- ❖ Banks need to strengthen non-financial support such as financial literacy programs, business advisory services, and entrepreneurship training.
- ❖ Special awareness campaigns and workshops should be conducted to inform women about available schemes, benefits, and application procedures.

- ❖ Continuous monitoring and evaluation of women-focused banking schemes should be implemented to ensure effectiveness, transparency, and long-term sustainability.

## CONCLUSION

The research clearly establishes that public sector banks in Thiruvananthapuram have emerged as a crucial financial backbone for women entrepreneurs by offering loans, credit facilities, and government-sponsored schemes such as MUDRA and PMEGP. The analysis shows that timely disbursement of funds and easy loan accessibility are the most significant contributions, which have directly influenced business growth and financial sustainability. However, persistent barriers such as delays in loan sanctioning, high collateral requirements, complex documentation, and lack of awareness continue to reduce satisfaction levels among women entrepreneurs. Correlation results confirm that these challenges negatively affect overall satisfaction, while regression analysis highlights that loan adequacy and access to schemes are the strongest predictors of entrepreneurial impact, explaining more than half of the variance in growth and empowerment. Non-financial supports such as training, guidance, and advisory services, although present, are perceived as weak and underutilized.

Overall, the study concludes that while financial support mechanisms of public sector banks have substantially aided women entrepreneurs, greater emphasis on simplifying procedures, reducing collateral burdens, and enhancing awareness and capacity-building programs is required to achieve sustainable empowerment. If effectively addressed, public sector banks can not only improve women's entrepreneurial success but also contribute significantly to employment generation, economic development, and gender-inclusive growth in the district.

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