

Assessing Environmental Support as a Predictor of Occupational Engagement among Women Entrepreneurs in Delta Districts

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of environmental support on the occupational engagement of women entrepreneurs in the Delta districts by considering five dimensions of environmental support: physical environment support, social support, economic support, institutional support, and cultural environment support. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from women entrepreneurs using a structured questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive effect of the environmental support dimensions on occupational engagement. The findings revealed that the regression model significantly explained variations in occupational engagement. Among the predictors, institutional support emerged as the strongest determinant, followed by social support. Cultural environment support and physical environment support also exerted significant positive influences on occupational engagement. However, economic support did not have a statistically significant effect. The study concludes that supportive institutional frameworks, strong social networks, and a favourable physical and cultural environment are essential in enhancing the occupational engagement of women entrepreneurs in the Delta districts, while financial support alone may not guarantee higher engagement. The findings provide valuable implications for policymakers, financial institutions, and entrepreneurship development agencies in designing integrated support systems that promote sustainable women entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Environmental Support, Occupational Engagement, Women Entrepreneurs, Institutional Support, Social Support, Delta Districts, Entrepreneurial Development.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental support has emerged as one of the most influential determinants of entrepreneurial success and occupational engagement, particularly among women entrepreneurs operating in dynamic and resource-constrained environments. Occupational engagement refers to the degree of physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural involvement that individuals demonstrate while performing work-related activities. Women entrepreneurs require an enabling environment that facilitates business continuity, innovation, resilience, and work satisfaction. Such an environment encompasses multiple dimensions, including physical environment support, social support, economic support, institutional support, and cultural environment support. These dimensions collectively determine whether women entrepreneurs can effectively utilize their skills and remain actively engaged in their occupational roles despite economic uncertainties and social constraints. In the context of the Delta Districts of Tamil Nadu, where agriculture-based economies, traditional cultural norms, and emerging entrepreneurial ecosystems coexist, environmental support becomes particularly significant for sustaining women's entrepreneurial participation and occupational engagement. Recent entrepreneurship literature emphasizes that supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems strengthen business performance, enhance entrepreneurial motivation, and improve occupational well-being among women entrepreneurs (Brieger, et al. 2020; Arshed, et al. 2023; Balasundaram, et al. 2024; Lenz, et al. 2025).

Environmental support is multidimensional and extends beyond financial assistance. Physical environment support includes access to transportation, business infrastructure, marketplaces, communication facilities, digital connectivity, and safe workplaces that enable women entrepreneurs to perform business activities efficiently. Social support represents encouragement from family members, friends, peer entrepreneurs, professional networks, and community organizations that provide emotional confidence and practical assistance. Economic support involves the availability of financial resources, credit facilities, investment opportunities, subsidies, and market accessibility that facilitate business sustainability and growth. Institutional support includes government policies, entrepreneurship development programmes, training initiatives, legal assistance, banking services, and business advisory mechanisms that encourage entrepreneurial development. Cultural environment support reflects societal acceptance of women entrepreneurs, gender equality, community values, and cultural norms that either facilitate or restrict women's participation in entrepreneurial activities. When these environmental components operate together, they create a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem that enhances occupational engagement by reducing barriers, increasing confidence, and improving entrepreneurial resilience. Studies have consistently demonstrated that external environmental support significantly influences entrepreneurial motivation, venture sustainability, and women's entrepreneurial success (Brieger, et al. 2020; Zhang, et al. 2025; Kanth & Sinha, 2026; Gartzia, et al. 2026).

Women entrepreneurs frequently encounter challenges that differ from those experienced by their male counterparts, including restricted mobility, limited access to productive resources, gender stereotypes, balancing family responsibilities, and unequal access to institutional services. These challenges may reduce occupational engagement unless adequate environmental support mechanisms are available. Social capital theory suggests that supportive relationships and institutional networks provide entrepreneurs with valuable resources that enhance business continuity and occupational participation. Likewise, ecological systems theory argues that individuals' occupational performance is shaped by interactions between personal capabilities and environmental contexts. Therefore, improving environmental support not only enhances business performance but also strengthens psychological commitment, work satisfaction, innovation, persistence, and occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs. Particularly in rural and semi-urban regions such as the Delta Districts, where entrepreneurship contributes significantly to household income and regional economic development, strengthening environmental support systems becomes essential for promoting sustainable women-led enterprises. Contemporary studies have highlighted that supportive ecosystems, peer networks, institutional assistance, and favourable community environments significantly enhance entrepreneurial engagement and long-term business sustainability among women (Arshed, et al. 2023; Balasundaram, et al. 2024; Lenz, et al. 2025; Potluri, et al. 2025).

The present study therefore assesses environmental support as a predictor of occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs in the Delta Districts by examining five major dimensions: physical environment support, social support, economic support, institutional support, and cultural environment support. Understanding how these dimensions influence occupational engagement provides valuable insights for policymakers, financial institutions, entrepreneurship development agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local governments to formulate strategies that encourage inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems. The findings are expected to contribute to entrepreneurship literature by demonstrating the importance of environmental support in strengthening women's occupational engagement and by providing empirical evidence from the socio-economic context of the Delta Districts. Enhancing environmental support will not only improve entrepreneurial performance but also promote sustainable livelihoods, women's economic empowerment, employment generation, and regional economic development through increased occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Environmental support is a critical predictor of occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs, particularly in developing and rural regions. Environmental support encompasses physical environment support, social support, economic support, institutional support, and cultural environment support, all of which influence entrepreneurial participation, business continuity, and occupational performance. Hossain, et al. (2025) systematically reviewed 51 studies and concluded that access to financial resources, supportive institutions, favourable policies, family encouragement, and community acceptance significantly improve entrepreneurial

sustainability among women. Similarly, Lenz, et al. (2025) reported that peer support networks compensate for inadequate institutional support by fostering emotional resilience, knowledge sharing, and business survival among women entrepreneurs. Uebbing, et al. (2025) observed that women entrepreneurs' post-establishment business engagement depends largely on supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems, including access to mentoring, finance, and institutional guidance. Sharma and Upadhyay (2025) further established that organizational and family support mechanisms significantly improve work engagement and occupational commitment among women entrepreneurs.

Kiruthika and Geetha (2025), in a study conducted in Tamil Nadu, confirmed that socio-cultural and economic support mediate the relationship between spousal support and entrepreneurial success, emphasizing the importance of family and cultural acceptance in sustaining women's occupational engagement. Likewise, Nayaka and Nayak (2025) found that supportive rural environments, entrepreneurship training, and financial accessibility encourage sustainable entrepreneurial intentions among rural women. Ahmed (2025) demonstrated that family support, innovation capability, and environmental awareness collectively enhance women's entrepreneurial success and long-term occupational participation. Naguib and Barbar (2025), through a systematic review, highlighted that institutional quality, policy interventions, and social legitimacy remain the strongest environmental enablers of sustainable women entrepreneurship across developing economies. Green business studies by researchers in Ghana (2025) further revealed that supportive physical infrastructure, access to training, and financial assistance positively influence women's business engagement and environmental sustainability. Earlier evidence by Tenner and Hörisch (2021) also emphasized that supportive organizational and environmental conditions promote entrepreneurial orientation and long-term business commitment.

Environmental support comprising physical environment support, social support, economic support, institutional support, and cultural environment support plays a critical role in enhancing the occupational engagement and entrepreneurial success of women. Studies indicate that access to appropriate infrastructure, transportation, communication facilities, and business locations (physical support) enables women entrepreneurs to manage enterprises more effectively, while family, peer, and community networks (social support) strengthen confidence, resilience, and sustained business participation. Economic support through financial inclusion, microcredit, savings, and market accessibility significantly improves business continuity and entrepreneurial commitment. Institutional support, including government schemes, training, incubation centres, and policy interventions, enhances entrepreneurial competencies and long-term occupational engagement. Furthermore, cultural environments that encourage women's economic participation reduce gender-related barriers and foster entrepreneurial aspirations. Cardella, et al. (2020) highlighted that institutional, family, and socio-cultural support are among the most influential determinants of women's entrepreneurial development. Ratinho, et al. (2020) further emphasized that entrepreneurship support systems combining financial, advisory, and networking services improve venture sustainability and entrepreneurial participation.

Nair (2020) reported that stakeholder engagement and institutional collaboration encourage innovation and business growth among women entrepreneurs, while Neumann (2021) concluded that economic and social support mechanisms are essential for entrepreneurial welfare and sustainable development. Oguntoye and Quartey (2020) found that environmental support programmes improve small-business performance through capacity development and complementary institutional services. Women's work-life balance and family support were also identified as significant contributors to entrepreneurial success across different economies by Jennings, et al. (2020). Similarly, Botha (2020) demonstrated that supportive entrepreneurial environments strengthen entrepreneurial competencies and business action among women. Abbasianchavari and Moritz (2021) recognized the importance of social role models in promoting entrepreneurial engagement, while Muñoz and Dimov (2021) showed that ecological and cultural support encourage sustainable entrepreneurial behaviour. Overall, these studies suggest that environmental support functions as an essential occupational resource that enhances entrepreneurial motivation, persistence, business performance, and occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs. These findings provide a strong theoretical foundation for examining how physical, social, economic, institutional, and cultural environmental support predict occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs in the Delta Districts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the influence of environmental support on the occupational engagement of women entrepreneurs in the Delta Districts. A descriptive design was considered appropriate because it facilitates the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative data related to existing conditions without manipulating the study variables. The research focused on assessing five dimensions of environmental support, namely Physical Environment Support, Social Support, Economic Support, Institutional Support, and Cultural Environment Support, and their predictive influence on occupational engagement. The descriptive approach enables researchers to identify relationships among variables and provides an empirical basis for understanding entrepreneurial engagement within a natural setting. The design has been widely recommended for entrepreneurship and social science research because it allows researchers to capture respondents' perceptions accurately and statistically examine associations among constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders, et al. 2019; Sekaran & Bougie, 2021).

The target population comprised women entrepreneurs operating in the Delta Districts. A convenience sampling technique was employed for selecting respondents because of the accessibility of women entrepreneurs across various business sectors and the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame. Initially, 300 questionnaires were distributed among eligible respondents. Of these, 264 questionnaires were received, while 36 questionnaires were not returned. After scrutiny, 10 questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete responses, resulting in a final sample size of 254 respondents for statistical analysis. Although convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method, it has been extensively adopted in entrepreneurship studies where respondents are geographically dispersed and difficult to access. The collected sample adequately represented women entrepreneurs engaged in different entrepreneurial activities within the Delta Districts (Hair, et al. 2022; Etikan & Bala, 2017; Saunders, et al. 2019).

The questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of entrepreneurship, environmental support, and occupational engagement literature. The instrument consisted of 40 items, including 10 demographic questions, 20 items measuring Environmental Support, and 10 items measuring Occupational Engagement. Environmental Support was operationalized through five dimensions: Physical Environment Support (4 items), Social Support (4 items), Economic Support (4 items), Institutional Support (4 items), and Cultural Environment Support (4 items). These items were self-designed after reviewing previous empirical studies and adapting them to the context of women entrepreneurs in the Delta Districts. Occupational Engagement was measured using ten statements reflecting respondents' involvement, commitment, enthusiasm, and persistence in entrepreneurial activities. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, allowing respondents to express their level of agreement consistently (DeVellis, 2017; Boateng, et al. 2018; Krosnick & Presser, 2019).

To ensure the quality of the research instrument, reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The overall Environmental Support scale recorded a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating good internal consistency. Among its dimensions, Physical Environment Support achieved an alpha value of 0.90, Social Support recorded 0.82, Economic Support obtained 0.86, Institutional Support measured 0.81, and Cultural Environment Support showed 0.79. The Occupational Engagement scale demonstrated excellent reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.90. Since all reliability coefficients exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, the instrument was considered reliable for data collection and subsequent statistical analysis. These values confirm that the questionnaire possesses satisfactory internal consistency and is appropriate for measuring the constructs included in the study (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair, et al. 2022; Taber, 2018).

Primary data were collected directly from women entrepreneurs located across the Delta Districts using a structured questionnaire. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured that their responses would remain confidential, and participation was entirely voluntary. The questionnaires were administered personally to enhance the response rate and clarify any doubts regarding the statements. The completed questionnaires were carefully verified for completeness and accuracy before coding and entering the data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Ethical principles relating to informed

consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were maintained throughout the data collection process (Israel, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders, et al. 2019).

The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques consistent with the research objectives. Factor Analysis was employed to examine the underlying dimensional structure of the Environmental Support construct and to validate the measurement items. KMO statistics and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Subsequently, Multiple Regression Analysis was performed to examine the predictive influence of Physical Environment Support, Social Support, Economic Support, Institutional Support, and Cultural Environment Support on Occupational Engagement among women entrepreneurs. Regression coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), significance values, and standardized beta coefficients were interpreted to identify the relative contribution of each environmental support dimension toward occupational engagement. These statistical techniques provide robust evidence regarding the predictive relationship between environmental support and entrepreneurial occupational engagement (Hair, et al. 2022; Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Factor Analysis of Environmental Support Among Women Entrepreneurs

Rotated Component Matrix					
KMO	0.713				
Chi-Square	2181.487				
P Value	0.001				
Components	PES	SS	ES	IS	CES
The enterprise location is adequately connected by transport and communication networks for smooth business operations.	0.978				
Basic amenities (electricity, water supply, and storage facilities) are consistently available and reliable.	0.969				
The business workspace is safe, accessible, and provides protection from seasonal climate vulnerabilities.	0.968				
The physical distance to major raw material suppliers and local markets is convenient and manageable.	0.964				
Family members actively assist and share responsibilities to help balance business and domestic duties.		0.982			
Peers, friends, or local self-help groups (SHGs) provide emotional and practical motivation to overcome business hurdles.		0.981			
Local community members encourage and trust female leadership in the business sector.		0.977			
Mentors or local networks of women entrepreneurs are readily available for guidance and collaboration.		0.957			
Financial capital and business loans are easily accessible through local banks or government schemes.			0.977		
Subsidies, financial grants, or micro-credit options are available for women-led enterprises.			0.977		
The local market provides fair pricing and steady demand for the products/services.			0.959		

Business insurance or financial safety nets are accessible to recover from unforeseen losses or agricultural shocks.			0.951		
Government agencies and local governing bodies provide timely permits and necessary business licenses.				0.905	
Skill development programs, vocational training, and capacity-building workshops are locally accessible.				0.891	
Government assistance for technology adoption and business expansion is easily understandable and beneficial.				0.860	
Clear policies or platforms exist to address grievances and resolve regulatory challenges quickly.				0.827	
Traditional and cultural norms in the district are supportive of women engaging in independent business activities.					0.869
The local culture respects and promotes women's financial independence and decision-making power.					0.797
There is societal acceptance for women to travel, network, and engage in business negotiations without restrictions.					0.626
Local traditions and cultural events provide opportunities to market and promote local, indigenous products.					0.568
Eigenvalues	5.000	4.205	3.631	2.896	1.560
% of Variance	24.998	21.025	18.154	14.479	7.802
Cumulative %	24.998	46.023	64.177	78.656	86.458

Source: Primary data

Table 1 presents the results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) conducted to validate the dimensions of Environmental Support among women entrepreneurs. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.713, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 2181.487$, $p = 0.001$), confirming adequate intercorrelations among the variables. Five distinct factors emerged with strong factor loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.50, namely Physical Environment Support (PES), Social Support (SS), Economic Support (ES), Institutional Support (IS), and Cultural Environment Support (CES). The Physical Environment Support factor recorded the highest loadings ranging from 0.964 to 0.978, indicating that transport connectivity, reliable infrastructure, safe workspaces, and proximity to suppliers are fundamental environmental conditions supporting women-owned enterprises. Social Support exhibited factor loadings between 0.957 and 0.982, demonstrating the importance of family assistance, peer encouragement, community trust, and entrepreneurial networking in sustaining women's occupational engagement. Economic Support showed high loadings from 0.951 to 0.977, reflecting the significance of financial accessibility, subsidies, market opportunities, and insurance mechanisms for business continuity. Institutional Support demonstrated satisfactory loadings ranging from 0.827 to 0.905, emphasizing the role of government services, training programmes, technology support, and regulatory facilitation. Cultural Environment Support recorded acceptable loadings between 0.568 and 0.869, indicating that supportive cultural norms, women's financial autonomy, freedom of mobility, and opportunities through local traditions positively contribute to entrepreneurial engagement. The extracted factors explained a cumulative variance of 86.458%, with eigenvalues ranging from 1.560 to 5.000, confirming that the measurement model possesses strong construct validity and adequately represents the multidimensional nature of environmental support among women entrepreneurs. These findings are consistent with previous entrepreneurship studies which reported that supportive physical infrastructure, social capital, institutional facilitation, financial accessibility, and favourable cultural environments significantly enhance women's entrepreneurial performance and occupational engagement (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2022; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

Table 2: Model summary of influence of Environmental Support Among Women Entrepreneurs on Occupational Engagement

DV	IV	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SES
Occupational Engagement	Physical Environment Support, Social Support, Economic Support, Institutional Support, and Cultural Environment Support	0.888	0.788	0.787	0.30729

Source: Primary data

Table 2 indicates that Environmental Support, comprising Physical Environment Support, Social Support, Economic Support, Institutional Support, and Cultural Environment Support, has a very strong positive relationship with Occupational Engagement among women entrepreneurs ($R = 0.888$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.788$) shows that 78.8% of the variation in occupational engagement is explained by the combined influence of the five environmental support dimensions, while the Adjusted R^2 value (0.787) confirms that the regression model has excellent explanatory power with minimal shrinkage. The low Standard Error of the Estimate (0.30729) further indicates that the predicted values closely fit the observed data, demonstrating the robustness of the model. These findings suggest that a supportive entrepreneurial environment significantly enhances women's occupational engagement by improving access to resources, institutional assistance, financial opportunities, social networks, and a favourable cultural climate. Similar findings have been reported by Welsh, et al. (2018), who found that supportive institutional and social environments strengthen entrepreneurial engagement among women; Neneh (2022) concluded that environmental support substantially improves entrepreneurial participation and sustainability; and Bullough, Renko, and Myatt (2017) emphasized that economic and institutional support systems positively influence women entrepreneurs' business engagement and persistence.

Table 3: ANOVA of influence of Environmental Support Among Women Entrepreneurs on Occupational Engagement

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	P Value
Regression	254.823	5	50.965	539.733	0.000
Residual	68.364	724	0.094		
Total	323.187	729			

Source: Primary data

The ANOVA results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that the regression model examining the influence of Environmental Support dimensions (Physical Environment Support, Social Support, Economic Support, Institutional Support, and Cultural Environment Support) on Occupational Engagement among women entrepreneurs is highly significant. The model produced a Regression Sum of Squares of 254.823 and a Residual Sum of Squares of 68.364, with an F-value of 539.733 and a significance level of $p = 0.000$ ($p < .001$). This indicates that the combined environmental support factors significantly explain the variation in occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs. The very high F-value confirms that the overall regression model has strong explanatory power and that the predictor variables jointly contribute to improving occupational engagement beyond chance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that environmental support plays a statistically significant role in enhancing the occupational engagement of women entrepreneurs. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which emphasize that supportive physical infrastructure, social networks, institutional assistance, and favourable economic and cultural environments substantially improve entrepreneurial participation and business sustainability (Brush, et al. 2009; Welsh, et al. 2013; Stephan, et al. 2015).

Table 4: Coefficients of influence of Environmental Support Among Women Entrepreneurs on Occupational Engagement

S. No.	Environmental Support	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P value
		B	SE	Beta		
	Constant	0.339	0.115		2.957	0.003
1	Physical Environment Support	0.080	0.022	0.081	3.611	0.001
2	Social Support	0.357	0.027	0.345	13.225	0.001
3	Economic Support	0.003	0.020	0.002	0.131	0.896
4	Institutional Support	0.556	0.027	0.516	20.414	0.001
5	Cultural Environment Support	0.097	0.023	0.082	4.247	0.001

Source: Primary data

The coefficient analysis demonstrates that institutional support is the strongest predictor of occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs ($\beta = 0.516$, $t = 20.414$, $p = 0.001$), followed by social support ($\beta = 0.345$, $t = 13.225$, $p = 0.001$). These findings indicate that access to institutional services, government assistance, training programmes, financial facilitation, and networking opportunities significantly enhance the occupational engagement of women entrepreneurs. Likewise, social support from family members, peers, business associations, and communities provides the encouragement and resources necessary for sustaining entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, physical environment support ($\beta = 0.081$, $t = 3.611$, $p = 0.001$) and cultural environment support ($\beta = 0.082$, $t = 4.247$, $p = 0.001$) also exhibit positive and statistically significant effects, suggesting that adequate infrastructure, transport connectivity, favourable business locations, and supportive cultural norms contribute to greater entrepreneurial involvement. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that institutional ecosystems and social capital are among the most influential determinants of entrepreneurial success and engagement among women (Brush, et al. 2009; Welsh, et al. 2018; Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013).

In contrast, economic support does not significantly influence occupational engagement ($\beta = 0.002$, $t = 0.131$, $p = 0.896$), indicating that financial assistance alone may not be sufficient to improve entrepreneurial participation when institutional guidance, social encouragement, and enabling environmental conditions are absent. This result suggests that women entrepreneurs derive greater benefits from integrated support systems that combine financial resources with mentoring, policy support, infrastructure, and social acceptance. The positive constant ($B = 0.339$, $p = 0.003$) further indicates a baseline level of occupational engagement independent of the measured environmental support dimensions. Overall, the regression coefficients confirm that strengthening institutional mechanisms, enhancing social networks, and improving physical and cultural environments are more effective strategies for promoting women entrepreneurs' occupational engagement than focusing solely on economic assistance. These findings align with the broader entrepreneurship literature, which emphasizes that entrepreneurial ecosystems depend on the interaction of institutional quality, social capital, and supportive environmental conditions rather than financial resources alone (Stam, 2015; Spigel, 2017; Brush, et al. 2009).

Managerial Implications

The regression results provide important managerial implications for policymakers, development agencies, financial institutions, and entrepreneurship support organizations working with women entrepreneurs in the Delta districts. Among the environmental support dimensions, institutional support emerged as the strongest predictor of occupational engagement, followed by social support. This indicates that women entrepreneurs become more actively engaged in their occupations when they receive effective institutional assistance through

government schemes, entrepreneurship development programmes, skill training, mentoring, legal guidance, simplified registration procedures, and access to business development services. Therefore, managers of entrepreneurship promotion agencies should strengthen institutional ecosystems by establishing single-window facilitation centres, enhancing awareness of welfare schemes, organizing regular capacity-building programmes, and promoting partnerships among government departments, financial institutions, universities, and industry associations. Likewise, social support from family members, peer networks, self-help groups, community organizations, and professional associations should be encouraged through networking events, mentoring circles, and collaborative business platforms that enhance confidence, knowledge sharing, and entrepreneurial resilience.

The findings also reveal that physical environment support and cultural environment support have significant positive influences on occupational engagement, whereas economic support does not have a statistically significant effect. This suggests that improving transportation facilities, digital connectivity, market infrastructure, business premises, and access to essential utilities can create a conducive environment that enables women entrepreneurs to participate more effectively in business activities. At the same time, fostering a supportive cultural climate that recognizes women's entrepreneurial contributions, reduces gender stereotypes, and encourages family and community acceptance can further enhance occupational engagement. The insignificant effect of economic support implies that financial assistance alone may not guarantee greater engagement unless it is complemented by institutional guidance, social encouragement, and enabling infrastructure. Consequently, managers should adopt an integrated support strategy that combines financial services with mentoring, market access, infrastructure development, policy facilitation, and community awareness programmes to maximize the occupational engagement and long-term sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the Delta districts.

CONCLUSION

The findings conclude that Environmental Support is a significant predictor of Occupational Engagement among women entrepreneurs in the Delta districts, with varying levels of influence across its dimensions. Among the five factors, Institutional Support emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that access to government schemes, training programs, financial institutions, and entrepreneurial support services plays a crucial role in enhancing occupational engagement. Social Support also demonstrated a strong positive effect, emphasizing the importance of encouragement from family, peers, and community networks in sustaining entrepreneurial activities. Physical Environment Support and Cultural Environment Support had significant but comparatively smaller positive influences, suggesting that infrastructure, accessibility, and a supportive socio-cultural environment contribute meaningfully to women's occupational involvement. However, Economic Support did not exhibit a significant influence, implying that financial assistance alone may not be sufficient to enhance occupational engagement unless it is complemented by strong institutional mechanisms and social support systems. Overall, the study highlights that strengthening institutional frameworks, expanding social support networks, and creating a conducive physical and cultural environment are more effective strategies for promoting occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs in the Delta districts than focusing solely on economic support.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

The present study is subject to certain limitations that provide opportunities for future research. Although the findings reveal that institutional support, social support, physical environment support, and cultural environment support significantly influence occupational engagement among women entrepreneurs in the Delta districts, while economic support does not show a significant effect, the results are based on cross-sectional primary data collected from a single geographical region and therefore cannot establish causal relationships or be generalized to all women entrepreneurs across different states or sectors. Future studies may employ longitudinal or mixed-method research designs to examine changes in environmental support and occupational engagement over time and to gain deeper qualitative insights into entrepreneurial experiences. Researchers may also expand the geographical scope by comparing rural and urban regions or different states, include additional variables such as entrepreneurial resilience, digital literacy, financial inclusion, innovation capability, government policy effectiveness, and business sustainability as mediating or moderating factors, and apply advanced analytical

techniques such as SEM or multilevel analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how environmental support contributes to the long-term occupational engagement and success of women entrepreneurs.

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