

Exploring the Impact of Gender-based Violence on Female Entrepreneurs in the MSME Sectors in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread but understudied impediment that can affect the entrepreneurial performance of women, especially in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector in Tamil Nadu, India. Although there is growing involvement of women in business, there is little empirical studies on the impact of GBV in business activities and financial performance in the regions. The research problem examined the common occurrence and nature of GBV in female entrepreneurs and how they affect the performance of the business enterprise. The research design involved a quantitative cross-sectional study with 372 female entrepreneurs being interviewed using a structured questionnaire. Based on the analysis using descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA), the study identified that there is a statistically significant relationship between GBV and business outcomes and overall business outcomes (notably in terms of decision making ability, leadership effectiveness, employee management, and overall productivity). Nevertheless, the correlation between GBV and financial performance was determined to be insignificant, which is why the financial results might be affected by more general external factors like market specifics, the institutional environment, and business strategies. Considering the cross-sectional characteristic of the study, causal links cannot be established. The study adds value to the literature because it incorporates social, psychological, and institutional viewpoints to elaborate how GBV affects the operations of an entrepreneur. It emphasizes the significance of gender responsive policies, institutional support mechanisms, and workplace interventions to reduce impact of GBV and facilitate sustainable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems dealing with women.

Keywords: Business Operations, Female Entrepreneurs, Financial Performance, Gender-based Violence, MSME Sector.

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive structural social challenges globally, significantly affecting women's physical and psychological well-being, as well as their socio-economic empowerment (1, 2). Despite sustained global efforts toward gender equality, GBV continues to disproportionately affect women, restricting their autonomy, access to opportunities, and participation in economic activities (3, 4). While extensive research has examined GBV in domestic, social, and workplace contexts, its implications within entrepreneurial ecosystems, particularly among women-led enterprises, remain underexplored. This gap is especially pronounced in emerging economies

such as India, where entrepreneurship is increasingly promoted as a pathway for women's empowerment and inclusive development (5, 6). In recent years, women's participation in entrepreneurship has expanded considerably, particularly within the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, which plays a crucial role in employment generation and economic growth (7-9). However, women entrepreneurs often operate within socio-cultural environments shaped by patriarchal norms, gender discrimination, and unequal access to resources (10). These structural constraints are further intensified by GBV, which can adversely affect both individual well-being and business performance.

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GBV manifests in multiple forms, including emotional, psychological, economic, physical, and sexual violence, each exerting distinct yet interconnected impacts on entrepreneurial functioning (11, 12). Emotional and psychological violence may impair cognitive functioning and decision-making ability, while economic violence can restrict access to financial resources and hinder business growth. Physical and sexual violence may result in trauma, absenteeism, and reputational challenges, ultimately affecting business sustainability (13–16).

The relationship between GBV and entrepreneurial performance can be understood through multiple theoretical perspectives. Institutional theory highlights how formal institutions (laws, policies) and informal institutions (cultural norms and societal expectations) shape entrepreneurial opportunities and constraints (17–19). In contexts where institutional mechanisms are weak or gender biases are entrenched, GBV can persist and limit women's active participation in economic activities. Feminist economic theory further explains how structural inequalities and power imbalances restrict women's access to resources, capital, and decision-making authority, thereby reinforcing economic vulnerability (20–23). Additionally, psychological perspectives suggest that exposure to violence negatively affects self-efficacy, motivation, and risk-taking behavior key attributes necessary for entrepreneurial success (24–26). Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of how GBV influences both the operational and strategic dimensions of women's enterprises.

This issue is particularly relevant in the context of Tamil Nadu, a rapidly developing state in India with a growing number of women-owned MSMEs supported by government initiatives, financial inclusion programs, and entrepreneurial development schemes (27). Despite these advancements, women entrepreneurs in the region continue to face persistent gender-based challenges, including limited access to capital, socio-cultural constraints, and exposure to various forms of violence (28). The coexistence of progressive economic policies and deeply rooted socio-cultural barriers creates a complex environment in which the impact of GBV on entrepreneurial performance warrants systematic

investigation. Moreover, existing studies have largely focused on national-level analyses, with limited attention given to region-specific experiences of GBV among women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector (29).

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to address a critical gap in the literature by examining the impact of gender-based violence on female entrepreneurs in the MSME sector in Tamil Nadu. Specifically, the study investigates how different forms of GBV influence two key dimensions of entrepreneurial performance: business operations and financial performance. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, the study provides empirical insights into how GBV affects day-to-day business functioning and overall enterprise outcomes. However, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, causal relationships cannot be established, and findings should be interpreted as indicative of associations (30).

The study makes several important contributions. First, it extends existing literature by explicitly linking GBV to entrepreneurial performance, an area that has received limited empirical attention. Second, it provides region-specific evidence from Tamil Nadu, enhancing the contextual understanding of women's entrepreneurship within socio-cultural and institutional frameworks. Third, the study adopts a multidimensional perspective by integrating social, economic, and psychological dimensions to examine how GBV influences business sustainability. These insights are particularly valuable for policymakers, practitioners, and support organizations aiming to foster gender-inclusive and safe entrepreneurial ecosystems (31).

Conceptually, the study positions gender-based violence as a critical independent variable influencing entrepreneurial outcomes. Drawing on institutional and feminist economic perspectives, GBV is understood as a manifestation of structural inequalities that constrain access to resources, markets, and networks, thereby indirectly affecting business performance (32). From a psychological standpoint, exposure to GBV disrupts cognitive functioning, decision-making ability, and leadership effectiveness, which are essential for managing business operations. Emotional and psychological violence can reduce concentration and confidence, while economic

violence restricts financial access. Physical and sexual violence may lead to trauma, absenteeism, and reduced productivity.

Based on these theoretical considerations, the study conceptualizes entrepreneurial performance through two primary dimensions. Business operations encompass decision-making ability, leadership effectiveness, employee management, and operational efficiency, reflecting the internal functioning of the enterprise. Financial performance includes revenue generation, profitability, and financial stability, representing

the economic outcomes of the business (33–37). The conceptual model assumes that GBV has a direct and significant impact on business operations due to its immediate psychological and behavioral effects, while its influence on financial performance may be indirect and mediated by external factors such as market conditions, institutional support, and business strategies. The proposed conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1, illustrating the hypothesized relationships between gender-based violence and entrepreneurial performance outcomes.

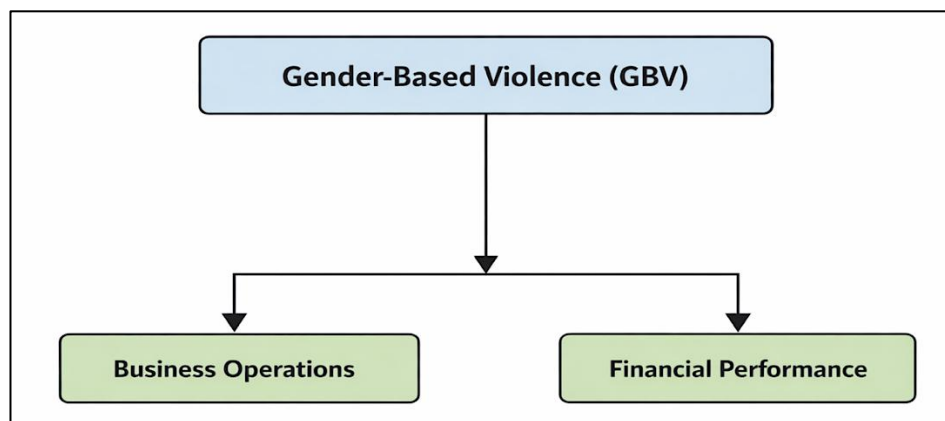


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Impact of Gender-based Violence on Entrepreneurial Performance

Based on the identified research gap and theoretical foundation, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Gender-based violence significantly impacts business operations among female entrepreneurs.

H2: Gender-based violence significantly impacts financial performance among female entrepreneurs.

Methodology

Research Design

This research design is quantitative because the study uses a cross-sectional survey design to test the connection between gender-based violence (GBV) and entrepreneurial performance in the MSME sector of female entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu. The cross-sectional design allows obtaining the data at one point at a given time in order to determine the relationship between the variables. It is however important to point out that even this kind of design cannot be used to make causal inferences and findings should be taken as evidence of relations but not causation.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researchers carried out the study on women entrepreneurs within the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector in Tamil Nadu, India (approximate GPS coordinates: 11°07'N; 78°39'E). The sample of 372 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling method in order to get a representation of various regions and enterprises of various types. The sample of 372 was deemed sufficient to perform the statistical analysis, especially, those techniques that rely on regression, because this sample size corresponds to the minimum in achieving reliability and generalizability in the context of the study. The sampling criteria were that the women had to be actively engaged in running their businesses and they must have been in operation long enough to contribute some input as far as experience is concerned.

Gender-based Violence (Independent Variable)

Gender-based violence was measured using a structured questionnaire capturing multiple dimensions of violence experienced by women

entrepreneurs. The study considered four primary forms of GBV, Emotional and psychological violence (e.g., verbal abuse, intimidation, mental stress). Economic violence (e.g., financial control, restriction of resources). Physical violence (e.g., bodily harm or threats). Sexual violence (e.g., harassment or coercion) Respondents were asked to indicate their experiences using a Likert-scale format, allowing for the assessment of frequency and intensity. This multidimensional measurement approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of GBV as a complex construct.

Business Operations (Dependent Variable 1)

Business operations were measured using indicators related to, Decision-making ability, Leadership effectiveness, Employee management, Operational efficiency. These variables capture the day-to-day functioning and managerial effectiveness of the enterprise.

Financial Performance (Dependent Variable 2)

Financial performance was assessed through indicators such as, Revenue generation, Profitability, Financial stability These measures reflect the overall economic success of the business.

Data Collection Procedure

The use of a structured questionnaire to the respondents who were chosen was used to gather primary data. The data collection exercise was confidential and voluntary. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and consent was obtained before the study was conducted. This study involved a non-clinical,

survey-based research design focusing on adult participants engaged in entrepreneurial activities. As the study did not involve any medical intervention, vulnerable populations, or sensitive clinical procedures, formal institutional ethical clearance was not required as per standard guidelines for minimal-risk social science research. However, the study strictly adhered to established ethical research principles, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents.

Data Analysis Techniques

The gathered data were computed with the help of the statistical tools, such as descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The characteristics of respondents and prevalence of GBV were summarized using descriptive statistics and the effect of GBV on the business operations and financial performance was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The statistical significance of the regression models was estimated with ANOVA. The assumptions made on the regression analysis were the strength and direction of associations between variables as the linearity, normality and independence assumptions were taken into account to ascertain the validity of findings. The level of statistical significance was considered at the right level of confidence.

Results

The robustness of the results was ensured by testing regression assumptions including linearity, normality, and independence.

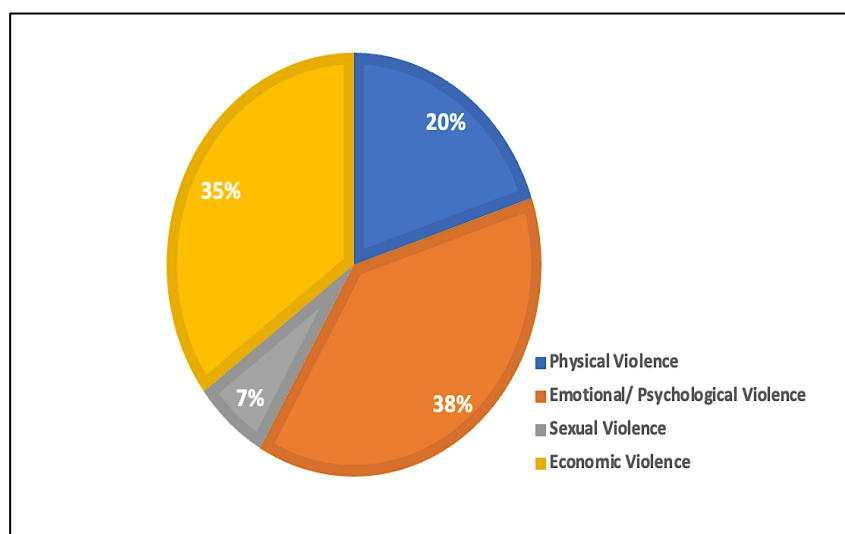


Figure 2: Distribution of Types of Gender-based Violence Experienced by Respondents

As shown in Figure 2, the distribution of different types of gender-based violence (GBV) experienced by women entrepreneurs. Emotional and psychological violence was the most frequently reported, followed by economic violence, physical violence, and sexual violence. Emotional and psychological violence were the most commonly referenced forms among respondents, building up a percentage of 38.4 percent (143 respondents), representing a constant theme and emphasizing the problem. Economic violence trailed closely behind in ranking, with 35.2 percent (131 respondents), sensitizing participants to the impact of abuse of a financial or resource-oriented

nature. Although not as common, physical violence was also known among others who experienced it and constituted a substantial 19.9 percent (74 respondents). Sexual violence was reported the least often, only 6.5 percent (24 respondents), indicating that it might either be very rare, or the most under-reported of the abuses. In conclusion, the studied forms of the manifestations of GBV indicated that the greatest incidence of occurrences affected emotional/psychological and economic violence, which confirms the urgent need to consider multifactorial interventions on a broader agency in GBV intervention.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Business Operations and Financial Performance Variables

| | Variables | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|-----------------------|---|------|----------------|----------|
| Business Operations | Emotional and psychological trauma | 3.95 | 1.041 | 1.084 |
| | Reduced cognitive functioning | 3.94 | 1.001 | 1.002 |
| | Physical health issues | 3.74 | 1.033 | 1.068 |
| | Social stigma and isolation | 3.61 | 1.092 | 1.193 |
| | Economic strain | 3.61 | 1.104 | 1.220 |
| | Impaired leadership and management | 3.73 | 1.039 | 1.080 |
| | Gendered barriers to resources | 3.65 | 1.115 | 1.242 |
| | Sustainability and growth challenges | 3.64 | 1.094 | 1.197 |
| | Increased resilience and coping mechanisms | 3.69 | 1.082 | 1.170 |
| | Support networks | 3.74 | 1.184 | 1.401 |
| Financial Performance | Increased costs | 3.63 | 1.157 | 1.338 |
| | Reduced productivity | 3.81 | 1.088 | 1.184 |
| | Impaired decision-making | 3.71 | 1.106 | 1.224 |
| | Loss of customer confidence | 3.68 | 1.029 | 1.058 |
| | Difficulty accessing credit or investment | 3.59 | 1.079 | 1.165 |
| | Stagnant growth and profit margins | 3.61 | 1.052 | 1.106 |
| | Financial crisis or bankruptcy risk sources | 3.58 | 1.161 | 1.349 |
| | Increased resilience | 3.67 | 1.061 | 1.126 |
| | Social awareness and brand differentiation | 3.50 | 1.112 | 1.237 |

As shown in Table 1 that the main issue affecting business operations is emotional and psychological trauma, where the mean was 3.95 with a standard deviation of 1.041, with subsequent issues being social stigma/isolation and economic strain with a mean of 3.61. In terms of financial performance, decreased productivity rated most serious, with a mean of 3.81 with standard deviation 1.088 while financial crisis risk

ranged with mean=3.58 and SD=1.161 is the least severe issue. The degree of variability in responses within each set is relatively low to moderate, showing varied interests. These findings highlight the importance of gender-based violence for business operations and financial performance thus calling for appropriate measures to be taken.

H1: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Significantly Impacts Business Operations

Table 2: Model Summary for Regression Analysis of Business Operations

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .252 ^a | .063 | .058 | 6.90966 |

Note: R = Correlation coefficient; R² = Coefficient of determination; Adjusted R² = Adjusted coefficient of determination; Std. Error of the Estimate = Standard error of the estimate; GBV = Gender-Based Violence. Predictors include (Constant), experience of GBV in the past year, and type(s) of GBV experienced.

Table 2 presents the model summary makes it easy to understand the association between the independent variables (gender-based violence experienced in the last year and the type of GBV experience) and the dependent variable (business operation). The r-value indicates only weak positive correlation at 0.252, showing that experiences of GBV and business operations are

not strongly correlated. The R Square value shows only 6.3% of the variance observed in business operations could be explained by the independent variables. This indicates that a majority of the variation, therefore, is due to other causes at work, which weren't explained in the model. The adjusted r-square of 0.058 also shows that the fit is not great, even when the effect of the number of

predictors is taken into account. The standard error of estimate of 6.90966 is a big indication that there is substantial variability in the data, meaning that the observed values do not differ much from

the regression line. In general, the model indicates that while experiences of GBV account to some extent for business operations, their contribution to the explanatory power is very low.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Regression Model Predicting Business Operations

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 1194.479 | 2 | 597.239 | 12.509 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 17617.317 | 369 | 47.743 | | |
| | Total | 18811.796 | 371 | | | |

Note: df = Degrees of freedom; Mean Square = Sum of squares divided by degrees of freedom; F = F-statistic; Sig. = Significance level (p-value); GBV = Gender-Based Violence. Dependent variable: Business Operations.

Table 3 demonstrates the ANOVA results a significant role played by the regression model in describing the relationship between the independent variables "Have you experienced GBV in the past year," "The type(s) of GBV you have experienced," and the dependent variable business operations. The regression sums of squares, 1194.479, represents a measure of the variance in business operations explained by the model, while the residual sum of squares, 17944.4707, indicates

unexplained variance. An F-statistic of 127.519 with a significance value of .000 shows that the model was statistically significant at the 1 percent level, which means that the independent variables as a whole do have a meaningful effect on business operations. While the model's R-squared value does suggest a modest overall explanatory power, it confirms a significant association between GBV experiences and business operations.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for the Impact of GBV on Business Operations

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|---|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 31.595 | 1.214 | | 26.019 | .000 |
| | The type(s) of GBV you have experienced | .817 | .309 | .133 | 2.648 | .008 |
| | Have you experienced GBV in the past year | 2.225 | .523 | .214 | 4.252 | .000 |

Note: Dependent variable: Business Operations, B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; Std. Error = Standard error; Beta = Standardized coefficient; t = t-statistic; Sig. = Significance level (p-value); GBV = Gender-Based Violence. Dependent variable: Business Operations.

Table 4 shows the hypothesis that GBV affects business operations is accepted based on the statistical analysis demonstrating significant relationships among the variable. The coefficients table indicates that both "the type(s) of GBV experienced" and "whether GBV was experienced in the past year" have a considerable effect on business operations, evident from relatively very low P-value (0.008 and 0.000, respectively), which

is well below the threshold of 0.05. The results imply that GBV experiences lead to changes in business operations that can be measured; hence, the hypothesis was accepted. Its acceptance is a pointer that GBV is detrimental to the efficiency, productivity, and overall functionality of the business; therefore, addressing GBV is critical to the sustenance of business performance.

Table 5: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Significantly Impacts Financial Performance

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .201 ^a | .040 | .032 | 5.86481 |

Note: R = Correlation coefficient; R² = Coefficient of determination; Adjusted R² = Adjusted coefficient of determination; Std. Error of the Estimate = Standard error of the estimate; GBV = Gender-Based Violence. Predictors include primary source of GBV, type(s) of GBV experienced, and experience of GBV in the past year.

The model summary shows in Table 5 that independent variables-"the primary source of GBV," "the type(s) of GBV experienced" and "whether GBV was experienced in the past year" explain 4% of the variation in the dependent variable, financial performance (R Square = 0.040). The adjusted R Square of 0.032, which reflects the number of predictors in the model, thus provides a

better estimate of the proportion of variance consequently accounted for. Although the R Square value is too low, such that only a small part of the variability in financial performance is explained for by the predictors, the model indicates a potential relation between GBV experiences and financial outcomes. The standard error of the estimate is 5.86481, interpreted as the meaning of

the average deviation of observed values from predicted values from the mean- that is, the

average deviation in model design assessment of predicting the dependent variable explanation.

Table 6: ANOVA Results for Regression Model Predicting Financial Performance

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 530.498 | 3 | 176.833 | 5.141 | .002 ^b |
| | Residual | 12657.725 | 368 | 34.396 | | |
| | Total | 13188.223 | 371 | | | |

Note: df = Degrees of freedom; Mean Square = Sum of squares divided by degrees of freedom; F = F-statistic; Sig. = Significance level (p-value); GBV = Gender-Based Violence. Dependent variable: Financial Performance.

Table 6 presents the ANOVA results provides information about the overall significance of the regression model that investigates financial performance as the dependent variable and the predictors: main cause of GBV, typology of GBV experienced, and whether there was GBV in the last year. The regression sum of squares, 530.498-shared variation in financial performance explained by the predictors; residual sum of

squares, which is, 12657.725- unshared variation. Any F-statistic of 5.141 with a significance of 0.002 indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. This means that, together, the predictors exert a meaningful influence on financial performance. The other remaining factors affecting financial performance considered outside those included in the model are indicated by low F-value and unexplained variation.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients for the Impact of GBV on Financial Performance

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|---|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 29.307 | 1.084 | | 27.027 | .000 |
| | The type(s) of GBV you have experienced | .220 | .264 | .043 | .831 | .406 |
| | Have you experienced GBV in the past year | .583 | .707 | .067 | .825 | .410 |
| | The primary source of GBV | .794 | .455 | .142 | 1.743 | .082 |

Note: B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; Std. Error = Standard error; Beta = Standardized coefficient; t = t-statistic; Sig. = Significance level (p-value); GBV = Gender-Based Violence. Dependent variable: Financial Performance.

Table 7 shows the coefficients tell how much each of the individual predictors; types of GBV experienced, whether GBV was experienced in the past year, and the primary source of GBV would likely affect the dependent variable, financial performance. Since the constant $B = 29.307$, $p < 0.001$, indicates the predicted financial performance when all other predictors are reduced to zero. For types of GBV experienced, we have $B = 0.220$, $p = 0.406$, and standardized beta = 0.043, suggesting a very weak and statistically insignificant effect on financial performance. For whether GBV was experienced in the past year, $B = 0.583$, $p = 0.410$, Beta = 0.067, and this effect is also not statistically significant. For the primary source of GBV: $B = 0.794$, $p = 0.082$, Beta = 0.142, nudging towards significance but still not achieving the formal threshold of $p < 0.05$. Overall, none of the predictors appear to have a significant effect on financial performance within this model. Hence, hypothesis H2 about the impact of GBV on financial performance was rejected since none of the specified variables influenced it significantly. Thus, there could be other factors which might

contribute more effectively to the financial outcome apart from the influences arising out of GBV variables.

Discussion

This Study analysed how gender-based violence (GBV) affects the business performance of women in the MSME industry in Tamil Nadu. The results present valuable information regarding the effects of various types of violence on business activities and financial performance, whereby the impact of GBV in companies is evident both directly and indirectly (38).

The findings show that gender-based violence is statistically significant as a determinant of negative effect on business activities. This discovery implies that the exposure to violence specifically emotional and psychological types of it influences the main managerial processes including decision making, leadership, and treatment of employees (39). Such findings are in line with the current literature that highlights the psychological and behavioral effects of violence that may compromise cognitive functioning, diminish self-efficacy, and appropriate

management of a business (40). Emotional distress, anxiety, and lack of confidence caused by GBV may restrict the capacity of an entrepreneur to make strategic decisions, team management, and operational efficiency. This confirms the argument that GBV is both socially and economically speaking an inhibitor, which has a direct impact on the productivity of entrepreneurs (41).

In theory, the findings are consistent with institutional and psychological theories. According to the psychological theories, stressed and traumatized individuals have a negative influence on motivation, focus, and risk-taking behavior, which is a core element of entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, institutional theory shows that the presence of socio-cultural norms and laxity in the implementation of protective measures facilitates the survival of GBV, thus providing women entrepreneurs with structural obstacles. Women in these set-ups might have limited movements, limited access to networks and lesser autonomy, which negatively impacts business processes (42, 43).

Contrary to that, the study concludes that gender-based violence does not affect the financial performance in any statistically significant way. The given outcome might seem counterintuitive; nevertheless, it can be justified by the fact that financial outcomes are complex and multifactorial. The external factors affecting financial performance are numerous, among which it is possible to single out the market conditions, competition, capital access, and business strategies. Although GBV might interfere with the internal processes, its impact on the financial performance is not always clear and apparent, at least in the short-term. Other entrepreneurs might also employ coping behavior or may have external assistance which would help in reducing financial losses though they are subjected to violence (44, 45).

It was also supported by other studies that are carried out in the past which indicate that the correlation between financial outcomes and psychological stressors is indirect and mediated through other variables. There is a possibility that GBV impacts on financial performance via intermediate mechanisms, including decreased productivity and absenteeism or minimized opportunities to grow, but not direct financial

deterioration (46, 47). Thus, the lack of the statistically significant correlation does not mean that GBV has no impact on financial outcomes but only demonstrates that the effect of the latter is more complicated and situational (43, 48).

The research novelty has a number of significant contributions to the existing literature. First, it builds upon the conceptualization of GBV because it analyses its implications in the field of entrepreneurship, a field that has had limited empirical studies. Second, it offers state-specific data on Tamil Nadu, hence showing the importance of local socio-cultural and institutional contexts on the entrepreneurial experiences of women. Third, the focus on the differentiation between the operational and the financial aspects of performance allows the study to provide a more sensitive insight into the impact of GBV on various features of the business operation.

Practically, the results highlight the necessity of the application of integrated policy measures that consider both the social and economic aspects of GBV. Gender-sensitive policies ought to be formulated by government agencies, MSME support institutions, and non-governmental organizations, which will offer legal protection, psychological counselling and financial support to the affected entrepreneurs. It is necessary to create secure and friendly business conditions that will stimulate an increase in the number of women in the world of entrepreneurship and their success.

Limitations Of the Study

Although the current research can offer important information on the connection between gender-based violence (GBV) and entrepreneurial performance, there are some weaknesses that must be considered. First, the study uses the study design known as cross sectional study, which focuses on gathering information at a given time. Consequently, the results are found to be associations of variables as opposed to causal relations. The use of longitudinal studies would be a better approach to studying causal dynamics and how the effects of GBV change over time because of the nature of self-reported information. Second, the research uses self-reported information, which can be biased. Since gender-based violence is a sensitive issue, some of the respondents might have underreported their experience because of social stigma or discomfort. This can have implications on the validity of the prevalence and

the severity of GBV reported. Third, geographically, the study is restricted to the state of Tamil Nadu. Although such regional focus can give comprehensive contextual information, it can restrict the external validity of findings to other states or countries with dissimilar socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Fourth, the research is also centered on the direct association of GBV and entrepreneurial performance. Nonetheless, the mediating and moderating variables (e.g., access to financial resources, social support systems, policy interventions, etc.) were not specifically looked at and could contribute to the observed relationships.

Future Research Directions

Based on the results of this research, one can outline several possibilities of future research. To begin with, longitudinal research designs can be implemented in future research to test the cause and effect relationship that gender-based violence has on the performance of an entrepreneur. This would offer more content on the long-term implications of violence on business sustainability. Second, comparative research on various regions or states would be possible to understand the impact of socio-cultural and institutional settings on how GBV is linked to entrepreneurship. This would increase the generalizability of findings and give more comprehensive policy implications. Fourth, mixed-method studies that will combine the quantitative analysis with that of the qualitative data can be used in the future to understand the experience of the women entrepreneurs and give a more comprehensive picture of the problem. Further studies could be conducted to understand whether the effect of the gender-based violence is different in various industries within the MSME sector.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of gender-based violence (GBV) on female entrepreneurs in the MSME sector in Tamil Nadu, with particular emphasis on business operations and financial performance. The findings indicate that GBV has a statistically significant negative influence on business operations, affecting decision-making ability, leadership effectiveness, and overall managerial functioning. However, the results reveal no statistically significant direct relationship between GBV and financial performance, suggesting that financial outcomes are shaped by a broader set of external factors such as market

conditions, access to resources, and business strategies. The study makes several important contributions to the existing literature. First, it extends the understanding of gender-based violence beyond its social implications by positioning it as a critical factor influencing entrepreneurial performance. Second, it provides region-specific empirical evidence from Tamil Nadu, thereby enriching the contextual understanding of women's entrepreneurship in emerging economies. Third, by distinguishing between operational and financial dimensions of performance, the study offers a more nuanced perspective on how GBV affects different aspects of business sustainability. From a practical and policy perspective, the findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive interventions that address both the social and economic consequences of GBV. Strengthening institutional support mechanisms, enhancing legal protection, improving access to financial and psychological support systems, and creating safer entrepreneurial environments are essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to certain limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships, and the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. Additionally, the geographical focus on Tamil Nadu may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future research can build upon this study by adopting longitudinal designs to examine causal relationships, conducting comparative analyses across regions, and incorporating mediating and moderating variables such as institutional support, access to finance, and social networks. Mixed-method approaches may also provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs facing gender-based violence. Overall, the study underscores that gender-based violence is not only a social concern but also a critical economic issue that directly and indirectly influences entrepreneurial success. Addressing GBV is therefore essential for fostering resilient, inclusive, and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance, GBV: Gender-Based Violence, MSME: Micro, Small, and Medium

Enterprises, SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

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Author Contributions

Gurupandi M: conceptualization, study design, Sundar S: conceptualization, study design, Ajay Adithya M: data analysis, interpretation, manuscript preparation, Narmatha M: literature review, data collection, Mahima Anna Varghese: supervision, critical revisions, Geetha R: supervision, critical revisions, Aazib Afraz TN: methodology validation, final manuscript review, Ravikumar T: methodology validation, final manuscript review. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Data Availability

The data that supports the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration Of Generative AI And AI Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools were not used. All intellectual contributions, data analysis, and interpretations presented in this study are the original work of the authors.

Ethics Approval

The study adhered to ethical standards for social science research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data

collection. No personally identifiable information was collected, and confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. As the study involved minimal risk and did not include clinical or experimental procedures, formal ethical clearance was not deemed mandatory under institutional guidelines.

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