



## Exploring Entrepreneurial Behaviour among Rural Women in Dairy Cooperatives

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- Beneficiaries exhibited higher entrepreneurial traits than non-beneficiaries.
- Participation in dairy cooperatives improved decision-making and leadership abilities.
- Mass media exposure supported entrepreneurial development among beneficiaries.
- Economic benefit and family support influenced participation in the dairy enterprise

### ARTICLE INFO

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### ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in 2025 in the Begusarai and Samastipur districts of Bihar to examine the socio-economic profile and entrepreneurial traits of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of women's dairy cooperatives. A descriptive research design was adopted, and a total of 260 respondents, comprising 200 beneficiaries and 60 non-beneficiaries, were selected through a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a structured interview schedule and analysed using frequency, percentage and the chi-square test. The findings revealed that beneficiaries were relatively better placed in terms of socio-economic characteristics and exhibited higher levels of social participation and access to information sources. A majority of beneficiaries (70.50%) were found to possess medium entrepreneurial traits, followed by high level (20.50%), whereas most non-beneficiaries (61.67%) fell under the low category. The chi-square analysis indicated a significant association between beneficiary status and entrepreneurial traits. The study concludes that participation in women's dairy cooperatives plays a crucial role in enhancing entrepreneurial behaviour, access to information and overall socio-economic development of rural women. Strengthening extension services and promoting wider participation in cooperative activities can further improve entrepreneurial capabilities and livelihood opportunities.

### INTRODUCTION

In many rural areas, women involved in cooperative activities have gradually taken on responsibilities such as milk marketing, financial management, and participation in group decision-making. These experiences contribute to the development of confidence, leadership ability, and economic independence, thereby reinforcing the role of cooperative institutions in promoting entrepreneurial behaviour among rural women. Women associated with such collective systems often benefit from training programmes, extension

support and improved access to information, which together foster entrepreneurial growth. In contrast, those outside organised structures frequently encounter constraints such as limited awareness, reduced institutional access and lower participation in developmental activities.

Entrepreneurial traits play a crucial role in efficiently managing dairy enterprises and improving productivity and income for rural women. Women who are associated with cooperative institutions are more likely to gain exposure to training programmes, extension services, and information sources, which contribute to the

development of these traits. On the other hand, women who are not part of such organisations often face constraints related to limited awareness, limited access to resources, and lower levels of social participation.

Previous studies have highlighted the important role of cooperative institutions and extension interventions in promoting entrepreneurial development among rural women. Participation in dairy cooperatives has been found to enhance income, decision-making ability, and access to resources, thereby contributing to women's empowerment. Women engaged in such institutional frameworks tend to develop better managerial skills and confidence due to regular interaction, training exposure, and collective functioning.

Entrepreneurial behaviour among rural women is influenced by factors such as education, access to information, and social participation (Gupta et al., 2013; Sharma & Singh, 2019; Kumar & Singh, 2023). Women with greater exposure to extension services and communication channels are more likely to adopt improved practices and demonstrate higher levels of initiative and innovation. Women with greater exposure to extension services and communication channels are more likely to adopt improved practices and demonstrate higher levels of initiative and innovation. However, women who are not associated with organised groups often face limitations in terms of access to information and institutional support, which affects their entrepreneurial development.

Studies reported in the *Indian Journal of Extension Education* have further emphasised that participation in dairy-based enterprises and extension programmes significantly improves economic motivation, leadership ability, and social participation among rural women (Singh & Verma, 2022; Kumar et al., 2023; Yadav & Patel, 2024). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening cooperative structures and extension efforts to enhance entrepreneurial traits and livelihood opportunities. Several studies have also reported that cooperative participation and extension support play a significant role in strengthening entrepreneurial competencies among rural women (Modak et al., 2018; Kobba et al., 2020; Bastida et al., 2022; Farnworth et al., 2023; Sharma & Singh, 2019). These studies highlight the importance of institutional support, access to information, and training in enhancing women's economic participation and entrepreneurial behaviour. Entrepreneurial behaviour among rural women has also been examined in terms of individual competencies and motivational aspects, highlighting the importance of behavioural components in enterprise development (Mubeena, 2017; Johar & Singh, 2022).

## METHODOLOGY

The present investigation was conducted in 2025 in selected districts of Bihar to analyse the socio-economic characteristics and entrepreneurial traits of women associated and not associated with dairy cooperatives. A descriptive research framework was employed to examine existing conditions without the manipulation of variables. Primary data were collected using a structured interview schedule designed to capture relevant socio-economic and behavioural aspects. A multistage sampling procedure was followed for the

selection of respondents. Initially, two milk unions, namely Barauni and Mithila, were purposively selected based on the active functioning of women dairy cooperative societies. From each selected milk union, one district was identified, resulting in the selection of Begusarai and Samastipur districts. Further, four villages from each district were selected, making a total of eight villages for the study.

A comprehensive list of women respondents was prepared with the help of local cooperative records and field verification. From this list, a total sample of 260 respondents were drawn, consisting of 200 beneficiaries (members of dairy cooperatives) and 60 non-beneficiaries (non-members). The respondents were selected using proportionate random sampling to ensure representation from all selected villages. Data were collected through a structured interview schedule designed to capture information on socio-economic characteristics, mass media exposure and entrepreneurial traits. Entrepreneurial traits were assessed using selected indicators such as decision-making ability, leadership, risk-taking behaviour and innovativeness. Based on the obtained scores, respondents were categorised into low, medium and high levels using appropriate statistical measures. The collected data were systematically coded, classified, and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive measures such as frequency and percentage were applied for summarisation, while the chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between beneficiary status and entrepreneurial traits.

## RESULTS

The findings of the study are presented to describe the socio-economic characteristics, mass media exposure and entrepreneurial traits of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of women's dairy cooperatives.

### Entrepreneurial traits

The distribution of respondents according to entrepreneurial traits is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents based on entrepreneurial traits

Category	Beneficiaries (%)	Non-beneficiaries (%)
Low	9.00	61.67
Medium	70.50	38.33
High	20.50	0.00
Total	100.00	100.00

The findings show a clear difference in entrepreneurial traits between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of dairy cooperatives. A larger proportion of beneficiaries were concentrated in the medium and high categories, while non-beneficiaries were predominantly found in the low category. This pattern suggests that participation in cooperative institutions contributes to the gradual development of entrepreneurial competencies among rural women. Such differences can be explained by the greater exposure of beneficiaries to training, extension services, and group-based activities, which support skill development and confidence building. Similar trends have been reported in earlier studies, where cooperative

participation was found to enhance decision-making ability, economic motivation, and social participation among women (Kobba et al., 2020; Kumar & Singh, 2023; Yadav & Patel, 2024). Likewise, Singh and Verma (2022) observed that access to extension education and information sources plays an important role in improving behavioural outcomes and entrepreneurial capacity among rural populations.

**Reasons for choosing a dairy enterprise**

The reasons for choosing the dairy enterprise among beneficiaries are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Reasons for choosing dairy enterprise by beneficiaries

Reasons	Percentage	Rank
Economical enterprise	87.50	I
Family support	81.50	II
Social recognition	76.00	III
Veterinary facilities	75.00	IV
Government schemes	73.50	V
Family influence	72.50	VI
Society influence	70.50	VII
Own interest	62.50	VIII
Neighbour influence	37.50	IX

The findings suggest that economic benefit was the most important factor influencing women to engage in dairy enterprises. In addition, family support and the desire for social recognition also played a significant role in motivating participation. This indicates that both economic and socio-cultural factors jointly shape women’s involvement in livelihood activities. The dominance of economic motivation reflects the need for stable and regular income among rural households, while family encouragement appears to facilitate women’s active participation in such enterprises. Similar observations have been reported in earlier studies, where economic gain and household support were identified as key drivers of women’s engagement in dairy-based activities (Yadav & Patel, 2024; Kumar & Singh, 2023). Furthermore, research has shown that social recognition and community acceptance can enhance women’s confidence and willingness to participate in entrepreneurial activities (Sharma & Singh, 2019).

**Association between beneficiary status and entrepreneurial traits**

The association between beneficiary status and entrepreneurial traits is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Association between beneficiary status and entrepreneurial traits

Category	Beneficiaries	Non-beneficiaries	Total
Low	18	37	55
Medium	141	23	164
High	41	0	41
Total	200	60	260

$\chi^2 = 82.63, df = 2, p < 0.01$

The chi-square analysis showed a statistically significant association between beneficiary status and entrepreneurial traits, indicating that women who are members of dairy cooperatives tend to exhibit stronger entrepreneurial behaviour than non-members. This relationship suggests that participation in cooperative institutions provides a supportive environment for the development of skills such as decision-making, leadership, and initiative.

The observed association can be linked to the regular exposure of beneficiaries to training programmes, extension services, and group interactions, which collectively enhance their capacity to manage enterprise-related activities. Similar findings have been reported in earlier studies, where cooperative participation was found to positively influence entrepreneurial orientation and economic behaviour among rural women (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Yadav & Patel, 2024). In addition, Singh and Verma (2022) highlighted that access to extension education and institutional support plays a significant role in bringing about behavioural change and improving entrepreneurial competencies.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of the present study underline the significant role of dairy cooperatives in shaping the entrepreneurial behaviour of rural women. Women associated with cooperative institutions exhibited relatively stronger entrepreneurial traits, better access to information, and improved socio-economic positioning compared to non-members. This indicates that cooperative participation goes beyond economic support and contributes to behavioural transformation. Improved access to communication channels and extension services appears to be a key factor behind this difference. Women who are regularly exposed to training, advisory services, and group interactions are better equipped to make informed decisions and adopt improved dairy practices. Such exposure enhances confidence, encourages initiative, and promotes active engagement in income-generating activities. The results suggest that information access functions as a catalyst in developing entrepreneurial orientation among rural women.

The statistically significant association observed in the study further confirms that institutional linkage plays a decisive role in influencing entrepreneurial behaviour. Cooperative platforms provide an enabling environment where women can learn collectively, share experiences, and gradually build managerial and decision-making skills. In contrast, women outside these systems often remain constrained by limited information flow and a lack of institutional guidance. These observations are consistent with earlier studies. Kumar and Singh (2023) reported that engagement in dairy enterprises strengthens economic motivation and decision-making ability among rural women. Similarly, Yadav and Patel (2024) found that cooperative participation enhances income opportunities and social involvement. Singh and Verma (2022) also highlighted that extension-oriented educational efforts contribute to behavioural change and skill development. The present study supports these findings by demonstrating that both cooperative participation and access to information significantly influence entrepreneurial characteristics.

However, the continued presence of non-beneficiaries with lower entrepreneurial scores indicates gaps in outreach and inclusion.

Limited access to institutional support and information sources restricts their ability to develop similar competencies. This points to the need for expanding extension efforts and ensuring wider participation of rural women in cooperative frameworks. From a practical perspective, strengthening training programmes, improving access to mass media, and promoting inclusive cooperative membership can substantially enhance entrepreneurial development. Such efforts can contribute not only to improved livelihoods but also to greater empowerment and self-reliance among rural women.

### CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that participation in women's dairy cooperatives significantly enhances entrepreneurial behaviour and socio-economic conditions among rural women. Members show better access to information, stronger decision-making ability, and greater confidence compared to non-members, indicating the positive role of cooperative platforms in behavioural development. The gap observed between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries highlights the need to expand the reach of such institutions. Strengthening extension support, improving access to training, and promoting wider inclusion can help bridge this gap. Overall, dairy cooperatives provide an effective mechanism for fostering entrepreneurship and improving livelihoods. Focused efforts to enhance their accessibility and functioning can contribute meaningfully to rural women's empowerment and sustainable development.

### DECLARATIONS

**Ethical approval and consent to participate:** Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection.

**Consent for publication:** All participants provided their consent for the publication of the data included in this study.

**Competing interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors have critically reviewed, revised, and approved the manuscript and take full responsibility for its content.

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