

Psychological Growth and Women Entrepreneurs: A Thematic Study

Lalitha Chandrasekhar

Independent Researcher, Tamilnadu, India

This qualitative thematic study highlights the essence of women's entrepreneurship, the sample consists of 700 applications submitted to a women startup recognition platform, of which thirty-three stories were purposively selected through in-depth telephonic interviews reflecting how entrepreneurship fosters personal growth beyond traditional success. The findings highlight entrepreneurship as not only an economic activity but also a pathway to psychological well-being and empowerment. The study has implications contributing to growing discussions on how entrepreneurship promotes psychological well-being and women empowerment.

Keywords: Qualitative thematic study, women entrepreneurship, psychological well-being,

Women's entrepreneurship is a welcoming pursuit, not only from an economic perspective, but to break free from limiting beliefs, setbacks to positive transformation. This study highlights how women entrepreneurial pathway enhance psychological well-being by thematic analysis which shows that challenges and worries not only managed but turned into strength and meaningful action through entrepreneurship. By looking these real-life narratives and linking to psychological lens, the study sets the stage to inspire and motivate more women to pursue their entrepreneurial dream with more vigour and confidence.

The present qualitative study is organized to eleven core psychological themes, drawn from participant's narratives and aligned with ideas from positive psychology, narrative psychology, and identity models. Each theme captures a different aspect of women's inner growth through entrepreneurship.

Method

This qualitative study examines a thematic analysis approach based on narrative psychology. The researcher reviewed around

700 applications submitted to women start-up recognition platform focused on narratives and in-depth interviews. The case studies are grouped under eleven psychological dimensions reflecting personal transformation. Purposive sampling was used. Thirty-three case studies were taken from the inspiring and innovative categories and each theme is linked to a psychological lens. To ensure confidentiality the participants names were masked and only the required information that helped in studying about the research were included. This study was conducted independently.

Theme	Description
Impact	A drive to create positive change.
Learning & Growth	New skills, adapting and evolving through experience.
Confidence & Inner Drive	Belief in oneself, motivation, and persistence.
Self-Discovery & Purpose	Finding new direction or meaning in life.
Creativity & Passion	Expressing one's true self through meaningful, inspired, and fulfilling work.

Support Systems	The presence or absence of support from family, community.
Cultural Identity	Integrating traditions, heritage, and cultural values into business identity.
Financial Freedom	Achieving independence.
Health & Well-being	The connection between mental/physical health.
Adversity & Resilience	Using personal pain or hardship as a source of strength.
Loneliness to Growth	Turning emotional emptiness into purpose, healing, and growth.

A Thematic Compilation of Women's Journeys Through Entrepreneurship

Theme1: Impact

Case Study 1A: Kindness, A Lifelong Impact

Moved by her daughter's act of solidarity toward a friend with cancer—and inspired by her late father's dying wish—G.S. dedicated her life to helping children battling the disease. She adopted 28 children with cancer, offering not just medical support, but education and emotional care. Founded - a WhatsApp-based initiative connecting those in need with community volunteers. Her journey exemplifies how personal loss and empathy can catalyse sustained social commitment and systemic change.

Case Study 1B: Standing for the Nation

N.S carried the Indian flag onto international platforms, turning a personal passion into a symbol of national pride. Years of rigorous training, unwavering focus, and deep-rooted values defined her journey. Her performances transcended competition, becoming acts of dedication, identity expression, and national representation. Now a mentor, she uplifts young women through guidance and support, embodying perseverance, humility, and patriotism.

Case Study 1C: Compassion in Action

P.M, leads a trust committed to supporting people living on the streets by providing not only food and shelter but also dignity. Collaborating with the local district administration, her work goes beyond emergency relief—volunteers help connect homeless individuals with healthcare, education, and job opportunities. Her initiative reflects a unique combination of compassion and systemic thinking.

Psychological Lens

Through prosocial motivation and eudaimonic well-being (Ryff, 2019), these women translate personal values into meaningful social action. Their generative concern for others further fuels lasting social change (Wiktorowicz, Warwas, Turek, & Kuchciak, 2022), demonstrating how entrepreneurship and leadership can become pathways for psychological transformation anchored in empathy, purpose, and societal contribution.

Theme 2: Learning & Growth

Case Study 2A: Leading to Innovate

S.K., a final-year college student, has emerged as a confident and visionary young entrepreneur. As a co-founder of a student-led start-up, she continues to balance academics and enterprise with determination and passion. Her innovative product and growing business reflect not only technical skill but also personal growth, resilience, and a drive for continuous learning and leadership.

Case Study 2B: Growing Beyond the Garden

K.N began her journey into gardening with the simple aim of providing healthy, home-grown food for her family. What started as a personal interest soon blossomed into a full-time business. She now teaches others the benefits of kitchen gardening—

emphasizing stress relief, affordability, and organic living. With a client base that extends across regions, she ships plant kits and offers personalized guidance to help others cultivate their own green spaces.

Case Study 2C: Tradition on Glass

V.B is a multifaceted artist and dedicated educator who has turned her passion into both a profession and a mission. As a school art teacher and entrepreneur, she explores 16 forms of painting—from mirror and coffee painting to the intricate Tanjore painting on glass, a unique specialty. Her current research into Tanjore painting highlights a commitment not just to mastering her craft, but preserving and evolving traditional Indian art.

Psychological Lens

The case studies under this theme embody the principles of self-directed learning and growth mind-set (Dweck, 2006), where challenges are embraced as opportunities for intellectual and personal development. These narratives also align with transformative learning theory, in which reflection leads to shifts in understanding, identity, and action (Taylor & Cranton, 2013).

Theme3: Confidence & Inner drive

Case Study 3A: Singing Through Barriers

A.A, from a coastal fishing community in southern Tamil Nadu, defied societal expectations to carve out a space for herself in the music industry. Though academically inclined, she chose to fulfil her mother's musical dreams—dreams that had been left unrealized due to systemic barriers. During the pandemic, the family faced severe financial strain. A. A , began participating in online music competitions, winning prizes that helped sustain her household. Supported by her younger sister and grounded in both Hindustani and Carnatic training, she now aspires to start a music academy, her journey is a story of self-belief.

Case Study 3B: Crafting Hope

S.K turned to handmade crafts during an emotionally challenging phase marked by childlessness and financial hardship. What began as a personal outlet soon grew into a purpose-driven business specializing in eco-friendly, biodegradable products like vetiver items, palm leaf crafts, bamboo handicrafts, and metal ware she began curating and sourcing unique, sustainable gift items. Starting from her husband's shop, she expanded to e-commerce platforms and social media, singlehandedly managing content creation and customer engagement. Her journey reflects how creativity and passion can provide empowerment and financial independence.

Case Study 3C: From Eight Packets to Empowerment

Inspired by her parents' legacy in street food and driven by financial need, M.S, launched her own food business. Despite initial resistance from her husband's family—concerned due to his IT background—she persisted. Starting with just eight packets and taking her 4-year-old son along for safety, she slowly built a loyal customer base. Today, with her husband now actively supporting her, her daily income has grown steadily, showing how belief in oneself can transform uncertainty into success.

Psychological Lens

These case studies exemplify self-efficacy—the belief in one's ability to succeed despite obstacles (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Each woman's journey reflects determination and the transformation of adversity into purposeful action. Their narratives also align with the concept of grit—sustained passion and perseverance for meaningful long-term goals (Credé, Tynan, & Harms, 2017)—and the principles of intrinsic motivation, where behaviour is guided by internal satisfaction rather than external reward (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Theme 4: Self-Discovery & Purpose

Case Study 4A: Steering Purpose with Direction

S R. runs a 24/7 call taxi service that caters to families, tourists, and corporate clients. Her business stands out for its tailored temple tour packages, offering convenience, cultural insight, and personalized experiences. What started as a practical service evolved into a meaningful venture enabling her independence and leadership.

Case Study: 4B: New Identity

What began as a personal initiative to design her own home became a transformative journey of self-discovery for D.B. Realizing her aptitude for spatial planning and design, she turned her passion into a full-fledged business. Today, she specializes in custom floor plans and interior design, overseeing every detail from concept to creation. With her own manufacturing unit, she ensures quality and uniqueness in every project, offering end-to-end design solutions. Her evolution from homemaker to entrepreneur redefines her identity through purpose-driven work.

Case Study 4C: Setback to Self-Made Strength

T.N, a transgender entrepreneur, initially ran two successful hotels but lost both during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than succumbing to the setback, she embraced a journey of self-reinvention. She learned household management skills and pivoted her focus to launching a factory, opening a stockroom, and starting a shop—demonstrating remarkable adaptability. Her journey is one of courage, transformation, and empowerment in the face of adversity.

Psychological Lens

These narratives reflect pivotal moments of identity exploration and purpose

realization, aligning with contemporary perspectives on identity development and meaning-making in adulthood (Schwartz, 2007). For these women, entrepreneurship became a space for self-renewal—an avenue to redefine their roles. Their journeys also resonate with the Purpose in Life dimension of psychological well-being, which emphasizes meaning, autonomy, and intentional living (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Steger, 2012).

Theme 5: Creativity & Passion

Case Study 5A: Grace with Grit

U.K, a classical dancer with over 25 years of experience, left her corporate job to follow her passion. Now, she runs a respected dance school, offers free training to underprivileged children, and has earned 9 world records. She not only empowers students artistically but also challenges cultural boundaries, encouraging girls from small towns to travel and perform across India.

Case Study 5B: Crafting Culture, Cultivating Change

I.R. brings tradition to life through her handcrafted kolu dolls and miniature food models, blending artistic finesse with cultural storytelling. Her creations are admired for their detail, creativity, and deep connection to heritage, especially during festivals. By customizing themed sets, she adds a personal and imaginative touch, making each piece distinct. Her work not only preserves traditional artistry but also nurtures cultural appreciation among younger generations.

Case Study 5C: Creative journeys

S.S. turned a simple discovery—the exceptional nutritional value of microgreens—into a thriving business and an educational movement. With a strong belief in accessible entrepreneurship, she conducts workshops for women and college students,

focusing on sustainable, low-investment cultivation methods. Her model not only promotes healthy living but also enables financial independence. Through her innovative outreach, she has sparked a growing community of microgreen entrepreneurs, making health and sustainability a shared mission.

Psychological Lens

These narratives highlight how personal passion and creativity drive psychological growth, self-expression, and a sense of purpose. Consistent with contemporary humanistic and positive psychology perspectives, creativity serves as a path toward authenticity and flourishing (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). These women have pursued self-directed, value-driven endeavours that integrate personal meaning with social contribution. Their journeys reflect how creative engagement promotes self-actualization, resilience, and psychological well-being (Forgeard & Elstein, 2014). When aligned with intrinsic motivation, creativity becomes not only a mode of expression but a transformative force for identity development.

Theme 6: Support Systems

Case Study 6A : Strength in Solitude

What began as a survival response to financial hardship transformed into a flourishing herbal care brand. R. C. L., driven by pressing family needs and inspired by a belief in the power of nature, began crafting herbal, chemical-free personal care products in her own kitchen. From humble beginnings, she now owns her store and has developed a line of over 85 products. Her work not only reflects a commitment to wellness but also marks a journey of resilience, and financial empowerment.

Case Study 6B: Grace in the Silence of Struggle

With no social media presence or digital support, K.S turned to her classical dance roots as a means of survival. What began as a modest initiative with just six Bharatanatyam students has grown into a vibrant class of sixty, purely through word of mouth. She also introduced Veena classes, further enriching the cultural education. With limited resources and visibility, she remains committed to preserving classical traditions. Her journey is a powerful testament to the strength of passion and deep grounding in discipline and cultural identity.

Case Study: 6C: Rising Through Resilience

After losing her father at age 11, S.S. and her mother faced financial hardships that pushed them into part-time work to sustain themselves. Despite these challenges, S.S remained committed to her education and simultaneously acquired skills in printing. Through perseverance she successfully launched and manages her own printing business, specializing in promotional materials like banners. Known for her punctuality and customer focus, a journey of resilience and success.

Psychological Lens

These case studies illustrate the complex interplay between adversity, autonomy, and self-efficacy in entrepreneurial growth. Drawing from Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the women's journeys reflect the psychological need for competence and autonomy, often fulfilled in the absence of traditional support systems.

Additionally, the concept of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) is evident—where adversity fosters psychological strength, new life perspectives, and resilience, each narrative confirms power of purpose and intrinsic motivation.

Theme 7: Cultural Identity

Case Study 7A: Weaving Tradition into Modern Design

M. D, is an artist and cultural innovator whose deep-rooted passion for traditional South Indian Kolam led her to explore its applications in textile design. By translating these intricate geometric patterns onto saris, she preserved a centuries-old art form while making it accessible to new generations. She further extended her vision through block prints representing the five landscapes of Sangam literature, each design a visual expression of Tamil cultural identity. Her work not only preserves cultural memory but reimagines it through wearable art.

Case Study 7B: Wellness Through Tradition

SG. K is committed to preserving and promoting traditional wisdom through organic farming and indigenous food practices. Starting with roadside sales, she steadily grew her reach, now delivering herbal oils, natural remedies, and traditional snacks to a loyal customer base. Her work is rooted in cultural authenticity and a belief that wellness begins with mindful living. She empowers other women by training them, her journey reflects a deep integration of health, heritage, and community upliftment.

Case Study 7C: Nurturing Traditions

S.M, crafts organic, homemade baby foods and natural skincare products rooted in traditional wisdom and chemical-free living. Her dedication to small-batch, quality-focused production reflects a deep respect for natural processes and mindful consumption. She not only provides nourishing alternatives for health-conscious families but also educates her customers, fostering a culture of awareness and trust. Her products resonate with those seeking authentic, safe choices, and her work stands as a testament to how heritage can shape modern wellness practices.

Psychological Lens

These case studies illustrate how entrepreneurship becomes a process of cultural identity work (Adams & Marshall, 1996), where individuals consciously integrate heritage and tradition into their personal and professional lives. Through practices rooted in art, wellness, and food culture, these women engage in meaning-making (McAdams, 2001), shaping life narratives that reflect both individual purpose and collective cultural pride.

Theme 8: Financial Freedom

Case Study 8A: Path to Purpose

K.L , is a first-generation literate who transformed her aspiration for independence into a meaningful career in healthcare. With sheer dedication and resilience, she established herself as a trusted physiotherapist, working with elite clients from the sports and cinema industries. Today, she runs four physiotherapy clinics combining modern therapeutic techniques with personalized care. Beyond her own success, she has created employment opportunities for other young professionals. Her story exemplifies the strength of will, hard work, and the pursuit of purpose.

Case Study 8B: Empowered to Empower

What started as a dream shared among friends has blossomed into a thriving educational enterprise. SB.H now runs six play schools and a Montessori training institute, blending structured early learning with the empowerment of women through skill-based education. By equipping women with the knowledge and qualifications needed to become early childhood educators, her initiative opens doors to financial independence and meaningful careers. The venture continues to grow, demonstrating her visionary leadership and commitment.

Case Study 8C: Dependence to Determination

F.B, transformed personal pain into a powerful pursuit of independence. Once financially dependent and humiliated by her husband's remarks, she found her turning point and built a career in Aari embroidery using the small gift money. From sourcing to stitching, she manages it all independently. Her deep sense of dignity prevents her from taking commissions when she passes on excess work to former students. Her journey is a story of independence and empowerment.

Psychological Lens

These narratives illustrate how entrepreneurship fosters psychological empowerment—the process by which individuals gain control over their lives, develop critical awareness, and take proactive steps toward self-defined goals (Zimmerman, 1995). For these women, financial independence is not merely about income generation—it becomes a medium through which they reclaim agency, build self-efficacy, and assert their identities in both personal and professional spheres.

The journeys also align with Sen's Capability Approach (Sen, 1999), which emphasizes expanding individuals real freedoms—their capabilities—to lead the kind of lives they value.

Theme 9: Health & Wellness

Case Study 9A: Towards Healing

P.M, combines traditional knowledge with innovation to offer health-based products like sprouted powders, malts, farm-fresh vegetables, and unique items such as banana flower malt and cactus flower pickle. She repurposes nutrient-rich cow colostrum—once discarded by farmers—and now ships it across India and abroad. She promotes natural wellness, sustainable sourcing and women's empowerment.

Case study 9B: Roots of Wellness

N.E. began her journey by creating chemical-free health mixes and oils, driven by a passion for clean and mindful living. Recognizing the lack of awareness about food origins, she established a wellness initiative where thousands of students have learned about organic farming and sustainable eating practices, aiming to make natural health practices accessible while educating future generations about mindful living.

Case study 9C: Health Through Conscious Living

V.S.D., She is a physiotherapist who works with children with special needs. During her practice, she noticed that one in every two married women she encountered suffered from PCOD (Polycystic Ovarian Disease). Upon further observation, she identified a potential link between commonly used sanitary napkins and the prevalence of PCOD. Determined to find an alternative, she began researching and eventually started manufacturing organic sanitary napkins made from natural herbs.

Psychological Lens

These narratives draw from the contemporary perspective, which focuses on factors that promote well-being and resilience rather than illness (Mittelmark & Bauer, 2017). These women demonstrate a strong sense of coherence. Their actions also align with the Common-Sense Model of Self-Regulation (Leventhal et al., 2003), showing how individuals interpret health challenges and create adaptive responses.

Theme 10 : Adversity & Resilience

Case Study 10A: Pain to Purpose

A.S. was married at just 15, losing not only her youth but also her emotional autonomy. Lacking familial support and facing constant humiliation, she channelled her pain into productivity. In a year and a half, she

established a thriving food enterprise offering malts, masala powders, and nutrient-rich ladoos made from millets and black rice. She has turned a life of early hardship into one of empowerment and monetary stability.

Case Study 10B: Ruin to Resilience

V.V. endured the collapse of her husband's travel business and the loss of her own job, forcing her to sell jewellery and pledge the family home—twice. Relocating and rebuilding from scratch, she guided her husband to restart as a second-hand cab operator while she herself took on cow farming and tailoring. Today, she owns her home, runs multiple income-generating ventures, and pays GST, standing as a symbol of perseverance.

Case Study 10C: Grace Under Fire

S.D., a single mother of two, runs a flourishing event and home decoration business in her hometown. Her journey — dealing with harassment, gender discrimination, and social isolation while caring for her children and elderly mother. Yet her dignity and discipline shine through. S.D. exemplifies how strength and quiet tenacity can rebuild lives even under relentless pressure.

Psychological Lens

These narratives exemplify post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), where adversity becomes a foundation for inner strength and new life directions. The women in these case studies did not merely “bounce back” from hardship—they transformed pain into purpose. Through entrepreneurship, they reframed trauma into agency, developing a renewed sense of self-efficacy, autonomy, and social value. This process aligns with contemporary meaning-making perspectives, which emphasize how individuals derive purpose and psychological growth from challenging experiences (Park, 2010).

Theme 11: Loneliness to Growth

Case Study 11A: Collective Upliftment

S.H. turned personal introspection into powerful social action. What began as a response to a deep emotional void became a mission to empower thousands of underprivileged children through education. Over 18 years, her NGO has reached more than 65,000 lives, guided by over 600 volunteers. Through mentorship, structured support, and community collaboration, not only bridged systemic educational gaps but reshaped her own life's meaning through service. Her story exemplifies how loneliness can be transformed into legacy.

Case Study 11B: Healing Through Purpose

S.SA. is chose to walk a less-travelled path—dedicating her life to children with mental disabilities. In a world that often isolates such families, she offers connection, care, and community. Through her clinic and play school, she not only supports children through therapy but also brings parents into the healing process by involving them directly, creating a space where both child and caregiver are nurtured. Starting with just six students, she now supports over 40 children—and continues to grow. Her journey transforms social stigma into compassion.

Case Study 11C: Emptiness to Empowerment

When family responsibilities required P.S to leave her job, she redirected her energies into creating a home-grown business rooted in nourishment and tradition. Drawing from her family farm, she began crafting pickles, porridge, and health mixes that soon reached global kitchens via customers who valued her authentic touch. What started as a personal need for balance evolved into a venture that supports other women and celebrates traditional food wisdom.

Psychological Lens

These narratives illustrate how emotional voids and loneliness were transformed into purpose-driven action. The women redirected inner pain toward initiatives that uplift children, families, and communities. Their journeys reflect the essence of eudaimonic well-being (Waterman, 1993), where fulfilment arises from authentic living and value expression. Through acts of selfless service, they also embody self-transcendence—the process of healing by contributing to something greater than oneself (Wong, 2016).

Results

Findings

This study confirms that psychological well-being is a proactive stance and for many women entrepreneurship is a medium of productivity and self-worth towards meaningful life.

This thematic analysis reflects how entrepreneurship drive will power to reach their goals shaped by vision, passion and positive habit building.

Many women later became mentors to uplift other women towards their entrepreneurial journeys.

Discussion

This qualitative thematic study explores women case studies reflecting their entrepreneur success and how they overcome from their challenges and distress into meaningful ventures. From a larger sample of 700 applications, thirty-three case studies were taken and analysed that reflects psychological richness and balance rooted in positive and narrative psychology. The findings highlights that entrepreneurship form as the basis rediscovering their identity, healing and purpose in life. The study also indicates that entrepreneurship is not only for crisis or financial freedom it is mainly

driven through creativity, passion, vision and goal in life. Many participants shared their happiness to add valuable contribution to the society and many women does mentor to raise other women towards women empowerment. The increased confidence and emotional maturity not only gained psychological well-being but a moral value and ethical bond towards society.

Limitations:

The study lacks formal review of existing literature, as this limits a wider theoretical authenticity.

This research is limited to cross sectional studies as the age of the participants are not documented so age or regional based comparisons restricts further generalizations of the results.

Due to time constraints the study was conducted in a short period.

Scope for Further Research:

Future longitudinal and In-depth exploration of qualitative studies could reveal how entrepreneurship serves as both livelihood and emotional healing for women facing personal or social challenges also how identity construction and well-being evolve across their entrepreneurial journeys.

Implications:

This study encompasses that entrepreneurship serves as a success that elongates beyond monetary growth, to a sense of belonging, purpose and continuity.

This study adds value and opens avenues for future studies to the persistent conversation linking entrepreneurship, gender studies and mental health in view to promote women empowerment.

Conclusion

The present qualitative thematic thirty-three case studies align with the significant insights of psychological well-being as a

collective win. It is interconnected culturally to the societies support, resilience and meaning to purposeful action that redefines entrepreneurship as a key influencer to enhance mental well-being. Overall, this study reveals that entrepreneurship is shaped not only by crisis but by motivation, passion and creativity, this concludes that entrepreneurship thrive more when driven by purpose and not for survival alone.

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Lalitha Chandrasekhar, Independent Researcher, (Tamilnadu, India) Email: lcs251996@gmail.com