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# Entrepreneurial Dimensions of Rural Women in Backyard Poultry: Insights from ICAR Farmer FIRST Villages of Rahuri, Maharashtra

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**Abstract**

The present study was undertaken under the ICAR Farmer FIRST Project implemented by Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Rahuri, in four villages of Rahuri tahsil, Ahilyanagar district, Maharashtra, with the objective of assessing the entrepreneurial behavior of rural women engaged in backyard poultry farming. The project area, classified as a dry zone with annual rainfall below 500 mm, adopted the Integrated Farming System model for sustainable development. Using an ex-post-facto research design, a sample of 200 rural women (50 from each village) was purposively selected. Data were collected through structured interviews, face-to-face communication, and observation, and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents exhibited medium levels of innovativeness (71.50%), decision-making ability (53.50%), achievement motivation (61.50%), aspiration (68.50%), risk-bearing ability (74.50%), and scientific orientation (53.00%). These results indicate that rural women entrepreneurs possess moderate entrepreneurial capacity, with potential for further enhancement through focused interventions. The predominance of medium-level traits reflects socio-economic and infrastructural constraints but also highlights opportunities for capacity-building programs aimed at strengthening innovation, scientific orientation, and decision-making. The study underscores the importance of empowering rural women in backyard poultry for sustainable livelihood development.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial behavior, entrepreneurship, backyard poultry, rural women

## Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. The wealth is created by individuals who take the major risks in terms of equity, time and career commitment of providing value to some product or service (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2001) [7]. An entrepreneur is one who organizes, operates and assumes the risk in a business venture in an expectation of making profit. The main characteristics of an entrepreneur are risk taking ability and innovativeness. The word "Entrepreneur" came from French word "Entreprendre", which means "to undertake" or "to do something". According to Cantillion (1755) "entrepreneur is the agent who buys means of production at certain prices, in order to sell at prices that are certain at the moment at which he commits himself to his cost".

Worldwide, female entrepreneurship plays a vital role in building stable, thriving communities by opening up economic opportunities for groups often left behind—women, low-wage earners, and minorities. Beyond just economic gains, women-led enterprises foster environments of cooperation, balance, and personal growth, enriching the social fabric of their local economies. Despite facing challenges like illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty, many women in developing countries courageously step into entrepreneurship, often starting tiny enterprises that not only uplift their own lives but also create jobs and hope for many others around them.

In India, poultry farming stands out as one of the fastest-growing agricultural sub-sectors, and for good reason. With rising concerns about providing adequate protein for rural populations, poultry meat and eggs have emerged as affordable, accessible sources of nutrition (Rath *et al*., 2015) [14]. Backyard poultry farming, especially in rural communities, has become more than just a livelihood; it is a lifeline. It empowers poor and landless farmers, particularly those from marginalized groups, offering them a pathway out of poverty and towards economic security (Islam *et al*., 2021) [4]. This sector doesn't just contribute to the nation's GDP; it nurtures dreams, supports families, and strengthens the pillars of rural India's nutritional and economic well-being. Through their care and dedication, women in poultry husbandry are not only feeding households but also sowing the seeds of community resilience and growth.

Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Rahuri is implementing

the ICAR Farmer FIRST Project entitled "Socio-economic Empowerment of Farmers through Farming System Interventions for Sustainable Agriculture Development in Ahilyanagar District" in Chinchvihire and Kangar villages since 2016-17 and in Tambhere and Kanadgaon villages from 2019-20 from Rahuri tahsil of Ahilyanagar district. These four selected villages are included in dry zone which is receiving an annual rainfall of less than 500 mm. Based on farming situation, the Integrated Farming System model was designed for the project area. The Farmer FIRST concept by ICAR places farmers at the heart of agricultural research. It recognizes farmers as central partners in identifying and prioritizing research challenges, designing experiments, and applying solutions directly suited to their own farm conditions. The approach emphasizes understanding and valuing the farmer's unique farm, their innovations, local resources, and the integration of relevant science and technology. This ensures that research is practical, inclusive, and truly responsive to the needs of those who cultivate the land every day.

Under Integrated Farming System Based Module backyard poultry farming is one of the components and this component was successfully demonstrated through ICAR farmer FIRST programme in project villages. In this one-day old chicks of improved breed of poultry of Kaveri or Gramapriya were provided to landless, small, marginal farm women in these four villages. The 50 birds are allotted to each woman. Participant farmers were trained on poultry management including vaccination and feed management.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in four villages (Chinchvihire, Kangar, Tambhere and Kanadgaon) where the ICAR Farmer FIRST Programme of MPKV, Rahuri was implemented since 2016-17 in Ahilyanagar district of Maharashtra. Research designs serve the purpose of allowing researchers to address research questions with validity, objectivity, accuracy, and efficiency. In the study, an ex-post-facto research design was employed, as the variables' manifestations had already taken place. Ex- post-facto research involves systematic inquiry where the researcher lacks direct control over the independent variables due to their prior occurrence or inherent non-manipulability.

The sample of 50 rural women from each village was selected, resulting in a total sample size of 200 participants. Data were collected through face-to-face interactions, observations, and structured interviews using a carefully designed questionnaire. For the data analysis, the researcher employed techniques such as frequency distribution, percentages, mean values, standard deviation, and applied Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient test to examine relationships within the data.

## Results and Discussion

### Entrepreneurial behavior of backyard poultry rural women entrepreneurs

**Table 1:** Distribution of backyard poultry rural women entrepreneurs based on the six components of entrepreneurial behavior

| Sr.no | Variables | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Innovativeness | Low (0 to 2) | 36 | 18.00 |
| | | Medium (3 to 4) | 143 | 71.50 |
| | | High (5 and above) | 21 | s10.50 |
| 2. | Decision making ability | Low (0 to 22) | 41 | 20.50 |
| | | Medium (23 to 26) | 107 | 53.50 |
| | | High (27 and above) | 52 | 26.00 |
| 3. | Achievement motivation | Low (0 to 13) | 38 | 19.00 |
| | | Medium (14 to 16) | 123 | 61.50 |
| | | High ((17 and above) | 39 | 19.50 |
| 4. | Level of aspiration | Low (0 to 17) | 27 | 13.50 |
| | | Medium (18 to 20) | 137 | 68.50 |
| | | High (21 and above) | 36 | 18.00 |
| 5. | Risk bearing ability | Low (0 to 15) | 17 | 8.50 |
| | | Medium (16 to 18) | 149 | 74.50 |
| | | High (19 and above) | 34 | 17.00 |
| 6. | Scientific orientation | Low (0 to 17) | 37 | 18.50 |
| | | Medium (18 to 19) | 106 | 53.00 |
| | | High (20 and above) | 57 | 28.50 |

The Table 1. shows that six components of entrepreneurial behavior of backyard poultry rural women entrepreneurs. A majority (71.50%) of respondents exhibited a medium level of innovativeness, followed by 18.00 per cent with low and only 10.50 per cent with high innovativeness. This indicates that most rural women entrepreneurs were moderately inclined towards adopting new ideas and practices in backyard poultry farming. Similar findings were reported by Patel and Jaiswal (2012) [13]. More than half (53.50%) of the respondents had a medium level of decision-making ability, while 26.00 per cent fell into the high category and 20.50 per cent in the low category. Similar results were observed by Narinder Paul and Sharma (2007) [11].

In terms of achievement motivation, it was reported that 61.50 per cent of the respondents belonged to medium achievement motivation category. Whereas, 19.50 per cent and 19.00 per cent of the respondents belonged to high and low achievement motivation categories respectively. The results were in line with Mahajan *et al*. (2023) [9]. A significant proportion (68.50%) had medium aspirations, 18.00 per cent had high aspirations, and only 13.50 per cent fell in the low category. This reflects a positive attitude towards enterprise growth among rural women, though aspirations may be limited by socio-economic constraints. Monika (2019) [10] noted that rural women often balance aspirations with perceived feasibility based on available

resources and support systems.

A majority (74.50%) of the respondents had medium risk-bearing ability, while 17.00 per cent had high and 8.50 per cent had low levels. This suggests that most respondents were willing to take calculated risks, which is essential in the dynamic poultry sector. Half (53.00%) of the respondents had a medium level of scientific orientation, followed by 28.50 per cent in the high category and 18.50 per cent in the low category. As Somvanshi *et al*. (2016) [15] stated, scientific orientation is vital for adopting improved breeds, feed formulations and disease management practices.

Across all six components, the majority of respondents fell into the medium category**,** indicating moderate entrepreneurial capacity. This suggests that while rural women in backyard poultry possess essential entrepreneurial traits, targeted capacity-building programs focusing on innovation, scientific orientation, and decision-making could help elevate them to higher levels of performance. The predominance of medium-level performance aligns with earlier studies on rural women entrepreneurship, where socio-economic, educational and infrastructural constraints often limit full potential realization (Patel & Jaiswal, 2012; Narinder Paul & Sharma, 2007) [13, 11].

**Table 2:** Distribution of backyard poultry rural women entrepreneurs based on their overall entrepreneurial behavior

| Sr. No. | Category | Respondents (n=200) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1. | Low (0 to 93) | 32 | 16.00 |
| 2. | Medium (94 to 102) | 127 | 63.50 |
| 3. | High (103 and above) | 41 | 20.50 |
| | Total | 200 | 100 |

Table 2 revealed that more than half of the respondents i.e. 63.50 per cent had medium level of entrepreneurial behavior, followed by 16.00 per cent were found to have low entrepreneurial behaviour, indicating a limited level of initiative and enterprise-related engagement. Meanwhile, 20.50 per cent demonstrated high entrepreneurial behaviour, showing strong initiative, risk-taking and enterprise management skills. Similar findings of Hema and Premavathi (2017) [3], Monika (2019) [10], Jaiswal *et al.*, (2020) [5] and Deekshita and Radha (2022) [2] reported that majority of the respondents belonged to medium entrepreneurial behaviour category.

## Conclusion

The study revealed that the majority of rural women entrepreneurs engaged in backyard poultry farming exhibited medium levels of entrepreneurial behavior across all six components—innovativeness, decision-making ability, achievement motivation, aspirations, risk-bearing ability, and scientific orientation. This indicates that while women possess the fundamental traits required for entrepreneurship, their potential remains only moderately harnessed due to prevailing socio-economic and infrastructural limitations. The findings highlight the need for capacity-building interventions, particularly in areas of innovation, scientific orientation, and decision-making, to strengthen women's entrepreneurial competencies. Strengthening these traits will not only enhance productivity and sustainability of backyard poultry but also contribute significantly to the socio-economic empowerment of rural women. The results reaffirm earlier studies emphasizing that tailored training, institutional support, and access to resources are critical for transforming medium entrepreneurial potential into high entrepreneurial performance among rural women.

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