



Beauty Parlour Industry and Women's Economic Empowerment in Bihar

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the growing role of the beauty parlour industry as a driver of women's entrepreneurship, employment generation, and local economic development in Bihar. Drawing on secondary data from the Bihar Economic Survey 2022–23 and the Time Use Survey 2024, the study highlights the stark gender gap in labour force participation: female LFPR in Bihar is only 10.90 per cent against the national average of 29 per cent, while male LFPR is 72.20 per cent compared to 73 per cent at the all-India level. In this context, beauty parlours emerge as low-investment, skill-intensive, and flexible enterprises that are particularly suitable for women facing socio-cultural constraints and heavy unpaid care responsibilities. The sector generates both direct and indirect employment, improves household income, enhances women's financial independence, and strengthens the local service economy in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. The paper argues that targeted policy support—through credit access, skill development, and institutional linkages—can further enhance the contribution of beauty parlours to women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth in Bihar.

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1. Introduction

Beauty and personal grooming have evolved from traditional practices centred on physical appearance to a broader focus on hygiene, wellness, confidence, and self-presentation in modern societies. Rapid urbanisation, rising incomes, globalisation, and the influence of cinema, fashion, and digital media have significantly heightened beauty consciousness, leading to the emergence of the beauty and wellness industry as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global and Indian service sector. In India, economic liberalisation since the 1990s has further accelerated the expansion of this industry through the entry of international brands, modern salon technologies, and new business models.

Within this broader context, beauty parlours have transformed from small, informal, home-based units into organised service establishments that offer a wide range of professional grooming and wellness services, including hair care, skin care, bridal makeup, spa treatments, and nail art. They have emerged as important centres of self-employment and entrepreneurship, particularly for women, by providing relatively low-investment, skill-intensive, and locally accessible livelihood opportunities. This shift is especially significant in states like Bihar, where structural constraints and social norms continue to limit women's access to formal employment and secure income sources.

Evidence from the Bihar Economic Survey 2022–23 reveals a pronounced gender gap in labour force participation rate : the female labour force participation rate in Bihar is only 10.90 per cent, far below the national average of 29 per cent, whereas the male rate is 72.20 per cent, close to the all-India figure of 73 per cent. As a result, the overall LFPR in Bihar stands at 34.57 per cent compared with 54 per cent at the national level, underscoring the scale of women's exclusion from the labour market. Findings from the Time Use Survey 2024 further indicate that women devote a substantial share of their time to unpaid domestic and care work, which constrains their participation in paid economic activities. These patterns highlight the urgency of promoting women-friendly enterprises that can accommodate household responsibilities while generating independent income.

In this backdrop, the beauty parlour industry in Bihar offers a promising pathway for enhancing female labour force participation, women's economic empowerment, and local economic development. However, despite its rapid expansion into district headquarters, sub-divisions, and even rural markets, this sector remains under-researched in the context of Bihar's labour market challenges and gendered development outcomes. The present study therefore seeks to analyse the growth and socio-economic role of beauty parlours, with a specific focus on their contribution to women's entrepreneurship, employment generation,

and household welfare in Bihar, and to derive policy implications for strengthening this emerging service sector as an instrument of inclusive development.

2. Review of Literature

Balcar, J., Sinha, P., Filipová, L. J., & Hirschlerová, N. H. (2026). The reviewed study demonstrates that both social networks and social media play a vital role in promoting women's entrepreneurial entry in India. The findings reveal that personal networks provide emotional support, mentorship, financial assistance, and access to business opportunities, while social media serves as a powerful platform for motivation, role modelling, knowledge sharing, and market exposure. The study further highlights that women with stronger social capital and greater digital engagement are more likely to initiate entrepreneurial ventures despite institutional and socio-cultural barriers.

Patwardhan, V., Hay, K., Bhan, N., Raj, A., Singh, A., & McDougal, L. (2025). The reviewed study highlights the significant role of social norms and perceived sanctions in shaping women's entrepreneurship across Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. The findings indicate that women who perceive supportive community norms are substantially more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than those exposed to restrictive norms. While supportive norms positively influence entrepreneurship in all three states, the effect of social sanctions varies by context, with Bihar showing the strongest interaction between norms and sanctions.

Ruthven, O., Sharma, A., Mukherjee, B., Das, S., Gogoi, A., Joshi, M., & Paul, S. (2024). The reviewed study reveals that adolescent girls in rural Bihar continue to face significant barriers in transitioning from education to employment due to patriarchal norms, restricted mobility, and limited access to suitable job opportunities. Despite these constraints, many girls demonstrate resilience, self-confidence, and determination, supported by progressive family members, education, and economic necessity.

Bhallamudi, I. (2024). The reviewed dissertation provides a comprehensive understanding of how digital platforms and AI-mediated technologies have transformed women's work in India's beauty sector. It demonstrates that platform-based beauty work offers women greater flexibility, income opportunities, and professional identity, while simultaneously reinforcing gender, caste, class, and religious inequalities through algorithmic management and precarious employment conditions. The study highlights that women workers continuously negotiate household responsibilities, workplace discrimination, and technological surveillance by adopting informal coping strategies and relying on community networks.



Rizvi, F. F. (2023). The reviewed study demonstrates that the DAY-NRLM/JEEViKA programme has significantly contributed to women's social empowerment by promoting self-help groups, financial inclusion, and greater participation in community activities. The programme has enhanced women's confidence, savings behaviour, and access to institutional credit, thereby improving their social identity and decision-making capacity. However, the findings also reveal substantial gaps in entrepreneurship development, including inadequate skill training, weak market linkages, insufficient infrastructure, and limited enterprise support.

Donner, H. (2023). The reviewed study highlights that the beauty industry has emerged as an important avenue for skill development and employment among young women in urban India. Vocational training in beauty services enhances technical skills, self-confidence, and access to livelihood opportunities; however, employment alone does not automatically ensure women's empowerment. The study argues that women's economic participation is shaped by class, caste, family responsibilities, and community norms, which continue to influence career choices and workplace experiences.

K. C., A. (2022). The reviewed literature indicates that micro-businesses, particularly beauty salons, play a significant role in enhancing women's economic and social empowerment. Beauty salon enterprises provide women with opportunities for self-employment, income generation, financial independence, and improved decision-making within their families. The literature also highlights that education, vocational training, supportive social networks, and access to financial resources are essential for sustaining women entrepreneurs. Although women continue to face challenges arising from patriarchal norms, family responsibilities, and limited access to capital, beauty salon businesses create a flexible and secure environment that encourages entrepreneurship.

Kumari, K. (2022). The reviewed literature highlights that startups have emerged as an effective instrument for promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, particularly in developing states such as Bihar and Jharkhand. The study demonstrates that startup ventures provide women with opportunities for self-employment, financial independence, skill development, and enhanced decision-making capacity. Successful women entrepreneurs have shown that entrepreneurship not only improves household income but also strengthens confidence, leadership, and social recognition.

Ghosh, A., Ramachandran, R., & Zaidi, M. (2021). The reviewed study highlights that the gig economy has created new employment opportunities for women, particularly in sectors such as beauty services, domestic work, food delivery, and cab driving. Flexible working arrangements have enabled many women to balance paid employment with household responsibilities while improving their income and financial

independence. However, the study also reveals that women gig workers continue to face significant challenges, including job insecurity, low social protection, gender discrimination, unequal wages, limited career advancement, and inadequate legal safeguards.

Singh, R., & Kumar, P. (2021). The reviewed study reveals that the informal sector serves as a major source of employment for inter-state migrants, particularly those with limited education and economic opportunities. Migration is primarily driven by poverty, unemployment, and lack of livelihood opportunities in the native place. Although employment in the informal sector contributes to increased income and improves the socio-economic conditions of migrant workers, they continue to face challenges such as low wages, poor working conditions, job insecurity, inadequate social protection, and limited access to education and healthcare.

Pankaj, A. (2020). The reviewed literature indicates that women's entrepreneurship plays a significant role in promoting economic empowerment, social mobility, and livelihood security. Studies have consistently shown that self-employment opportunities, particularly through microfinance, self-help groups, and skill-based enterprises, enhance women's income, confidence, and decision-making capacity. In the context of Bihar, the Jeevika programme has been instrumental in improving women's financial inclusion, mobility, and social participation while gradually challenging traditional patriarchal norms. However, persistent barriers such as limited ownership of productive assets, gender discrimination, and socio-cultural restrictions continue to constrain women's economic advancement.

Chintu, A. K. (2019). The reviewed literature suggests that women entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic development and women's empowerment, particularly in developing regions like Bihar. Studies highlight that entrepreneurship enhances women's income, self-confidence, decision-making ability, and social status while contributing to employment generation and poverty reduction. The literature also identifies major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, including inadequate access to finance, low educational attainment, limited mobility, poor infrastructure, social discrimination, and lack of institutional support. Self-help groups (SHGs), government initiatives, and entrepreneurship development programmes have played an important role in encouraging women's participation in business activities.

Sengupta, C. (2019). The reviewed study demonstrates that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an important instrument for promoting women's empowerment in India through education, skill development, entrepreneurship, and livelihood generation. The initiatives undertaken by companies such as Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Bajaj Auto, and CEAT have created opportunities for women by enhancing their employability, financial independence, and entrepreneurial capabilities.

7. Need for Study

The need for this study arises from the sharp gender gap in labour force participation in Bihar, where female LFPR is only 10.90 per cent against the national average of 29 per cent, indicating the urgent need for women-friendly income opportunities. At the same time, the rapid growth of beauty parlours as low-investment, skill-based enterprises offers a practical route for women's self-employment, financial independence, and local economic development.

8. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of the beauty parlour industry as a source of women's entrepreneurship, employment generation, and socio-economic development in Bihar. The study also aims to understand how beauty parlours, as low-investment and skill-based enterprises, can help improve women's income, financial independence, and labour force participation in a state where female participation in the workforce remains very low.

- To analyze the growth and nature of the beauty parlour industry in Bihar.
- To examine the role of beauty parlours in promoting women's entrepreneurship and self-employment.
- To assess the employment and income-generating potential of beauty parlour businesses.
- To study the socio-economic impact of beauty parlours on women empowerment and local development.

9. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research methodology based mainly on secondary data collected from the Bihar Economic Survey 2022–23, the Time Use Survey 2024, and other relevant published sources on the beauty parlour industry and women entrepreneurship. The study examines the socio-economic role of beauty parlours in Bihar by analysing their contribution to self-employment, income generation, labour force participation, and women empowerment. The data are interpreted qualitatively and supported with selected facts and figures to understand the growth, importance, and development potential of beauty parlour enterprises in the state.



10. Beauty Parlours as an Emerging Service Sector

Bihar has experienced notable economic progress over the last two decades, reflected in Beauty and personal grooming have been an important part of human life since ancient times and have evolved with changing social, cultural, and economic conditions. In the modern era, beauty extends beyond physical appearance to include hygiene, personality, confidence, wellness, and self-presentation. Rapid urbanization, globalization, rising incomes, and the influence of media and technology have significantly increased beauty consciousness among people. As a result, the beauty and wellness industry has become one of the fastest-growing service sectors worldwide, creating new opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

Beauty is a multidimensional concept that varies across individuals and societies. Traditionally associated with physical attractiveness, it now encompasses overall well-being, health, grooming, and self-confidence. In India, beauty has long been linked with Ayurveda and natural remedies, where ingredients such as turmeric, sandalwood, henna, and herbal oils have been used for skin and hair care. Today, beauty and personal grooming are no longer limited to women; men are also increasingly participating in grooming and wellness activities, expanding the demand for beauty services.

The history of beauty culture dates back to ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, and India, where natural cosmetics and beauty practices were widely followed. Over time, these traditional practices evolved into a modern commercial industry with the development of cosmetics, professional salon services, and advanced beauty technologies. The growth of cinema, fashion, advertising, and digital media has further accelerated the popularity of beauty products and services.

In India, the beauty industry experienced rapid expansion after the economic liberalization of the 1990s, which encouraged the entry of international brands and modern salon technologies. Today, beauty parlours and salons have become important centres for personal grooming, women entrepreneurship, employment generation, and local economic development. They play a significant role in promoting self-employment, especially among women, and contribute to the growth of the service sector in both urban and rural areas.

11. Concept and Growth of Beauty Parlours

Concept of Beauty Parlours : A beauty parlour is a service-oriented establishment that provides professional beauty, grooming, and wellness services to enhance personal appearance, hygiene, and self-confidence. Initially confined to urban areas, beauty parlours have now expanded to small towns and rural regions due to increasing awareness of personal care and changing lifestyles. Besides cosmetic services,



beauty parlours have become important centres of women entrepreneurship, self-employment, and skill development.

Major Services Provided

- Hair care and hairstyling
- Skin care and facial treatments
- Bridal and party makeup
- Manicure and pedicure
- Spa and wellness services
- Nail art and cosmetic treatments

Growth of the Beauty Industry

The beauty and wellness industry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing service sectors in India due to economic development, globalization, and changing consumer preferences. The industry has expanded rapidly after the economic liberalization of 1991, supported by rising disposable incomes, urbanization, technological advancements, and increasing beauty consciousness.

Major Growth Drivers

- Rapid urbanization and modernization
- Rising disposable income
- Increasing beauty awareness
- Expansion of digital media and social media
- Entry of international cosmetic brands
- Growth of e-commerce and online beauty platforms

Beauty Parlours in India and Bihar

Beauty parlours have evolved from small home-based establishments to organized businesses that provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, especially for women. In Bihar, beauty parlours are increasingly expanding into district headquarters, sub-divisions, and rural markets due to changing social attitudes, higher demand for bridal and grooming services, and government-supported skill development programmes.



Economic and Social Importance

- Generates self-employment and wage employment
- Promotes women entrepreneurship
- Improves household income
- Supports the local service economy
- Encourages skill development
- Enhances women's financial independence

12. Beauty Parlour Industry and Women Entrepreneurship

Beauty Parlour Industry in India

The beauty parlour industry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of India's service sector. Increasing beauty awareness, urbanization, higher disposable incomes, changing lifestyles, and media influence have accelerated the growth of beauty and wellness services. Today, beauty parlours have expanded from metropolitan cities to small towns and rural areas, creating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Major Features

- Rapidly growing service industry
- Expanding demand in urban and rural areas
- Generates employment and self-employment
- Promotes women entrepreneurship
- Contributes to the local economy

Major Services

- Hair care and styling
- Skin care and facial treatments
- Bridal and party makeup
- Spa and wellness services
- Nail art and cosmetic treatments



Women Entrepreneurship through Beauty Parlours

Beauty parlours provide one of the most accessible business opportunities for women because they require relatively low investment and specialized skills. They enable women to earn independent income, improve their social status, and participate more actively in household and business decision-making. Government skill development programmes have further encouraged women to establish beauty parlour enterprises.

Major Benefits

- Self-employment opportunities
- Financial independence
- Income generation
- Skill development
- Increased self-confidence
- Greater participation in family decision-making

Employment Generation

The beauty parlour industry is a labour-intensive sector that creates both direct and indirect employment. Besides beauticians and makeup artists, the industry supports cosmetic suppliers, training institutes, photographers, event managers, and other allied businesses, thereby contributing to local economic development.

Employment Opportunities

- Beauticians
- Hair stylists
- Makeup artists
- Spa therapists
- Salon managers
- Receptionists
- Cosmetic consultants
- Beauty trainers

Socio-economic Importance

The rapid expansion of beauty parlours has improved the socio-economic status of many women, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Beauty parlours not only increase household income but also



promote entrepreneurship, reduce unemployment, and strengthen the service sector. They have become an important instrument for women empowerment and inclusive local economic development.

Key Contributions

- Improves household income
- Enhances women's financial independence
- Creates employment opportunities
- Reduces poverty
- Strengthens the service economy
- Supports local market development
- Promotes women empowerment

13. Labour Force Participation Rate in Bihar

Labour Force Participation Rate in Bihar & India				
Sl. No.	Economy	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
1	Bihar	10.90	72.20	34.57
2	India	29	73	54

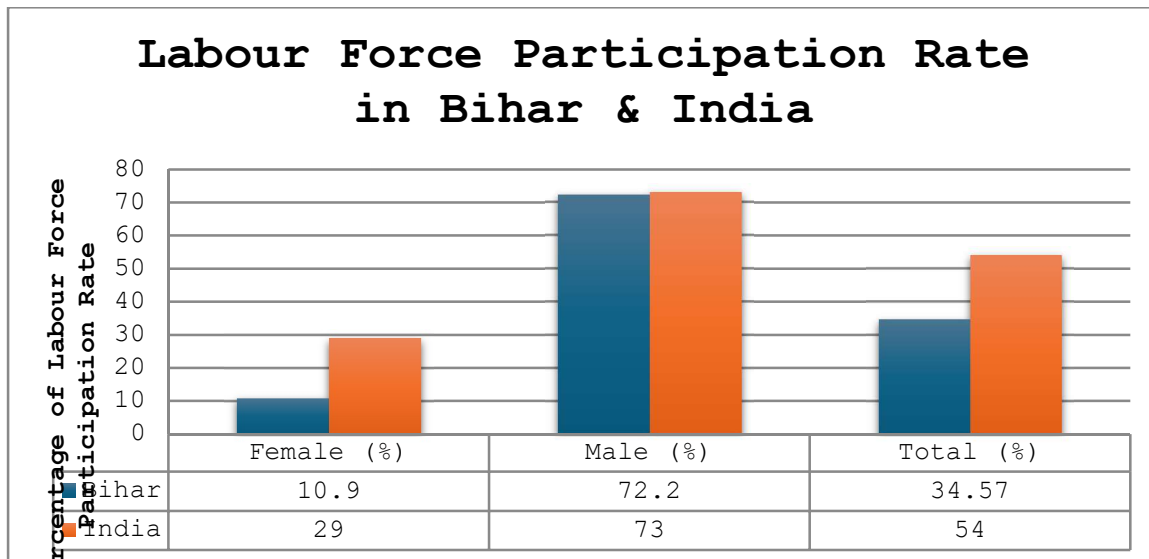
Source : Bihar economic Survey 2022-2023

Labour Force Participation Rate in Bihar

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in Bihar and India based on the *Bihar Economic Survey 2022–23*. The data reveal a significant gender disparity in labour force participation, particularly in Bihar. The female labour force participation rate in Bihar is only **10.90%**, which is substantially lower than the national average of **29%**. In contrast, the male labour force participation rate in Bihar is **72.20%**, which is close to the national average of **73%**. Consequently, the overall labour force participation rate in Bihar stands at **34.57%**, considerably below the national average of **54%**.

The exceptionally low participation of women in Bihar's labour market indicates limited employment opportunities and socio-cultural barriers that restrict women's economic involvement. Factors such as lower educational attainment, household responsibilities, gender norms, limited access to skill development, and fewer formal employment opportunities contribute to this gap. This highlights the need for promoting women-friendly enterprises and self-employment opportunities within the state.

In this context, the beauty parlour industry has emerged as an important avenue for women entrepreneurship and employment generation. Beauty parlours require relatively low investment, provide flexible working conditions, and enable women to generate independent income while balancing household responsibilities. Therefore, the expansion of beauty parlour businesses in areas such as **Bihar** can play a significant role in increasing female labour force participation, promoting women's economic empowerment, and contributing to local economic development.



14. Time Use Survey 2024: Gender Differences in Work Participation

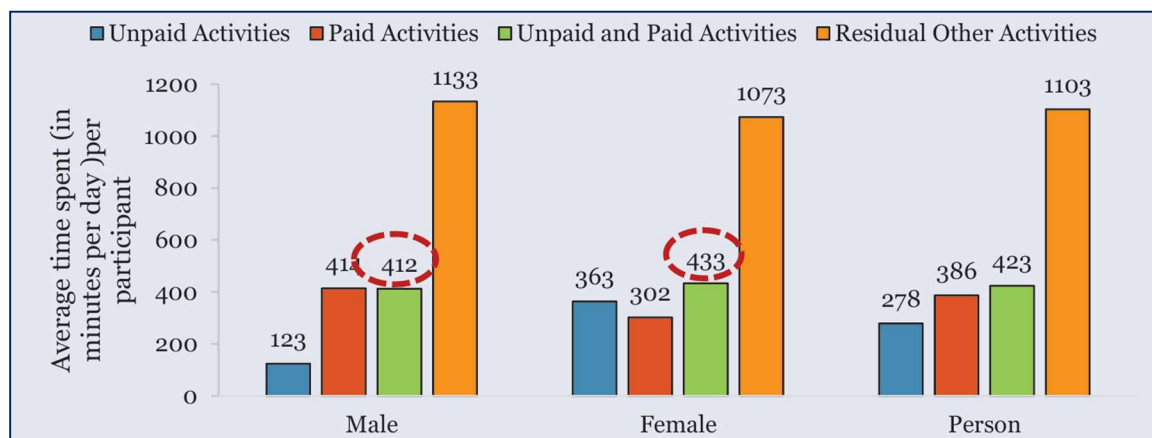
Overview of the Time Use Survey : The Time Use Survey (TUS) 2024, conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), provides valuable insights into how individuals allocate their time to paid and unpaid activities. India is among the few countries that conduct a nationwide Time Use Survey to measure the participation of men and women in employment, domestic work, caregiving, and other daily activities. The survey serves as an important tool for understanding gender disparities in labour force participation and unpaid work.

Participation in Employment Activities : The survey indicates an improvement in employment participation compared to the 2019 survey. Among individuals aged 15–59 years, the participation rate of males in employment-related activities increased from 70.9 per cent in 2019 to 75 per cent in 2024, while the participation rate of females increased from 21.8 per cent to 25 per cent. Although female participation has improved, it remains significantly lower than that of males, reflecting the continued gender gap in the labour market.

Caregiving and Unpaid Work : Women continue to bear the primary responsibility for unpaid caregiving and household activities. Around 41 per cent of women aged 15–59 years participated in caregiving activities compared to 21.4 per cent of men. On average, women spent 140 minutes per day on caregiving, whereas men spent only 74 minutes. Similarly, women devoted approximately 363 minutes per day to unpaid work, nearly three times the 123 minutes spent by men, highlighting the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities.

Dual Work Burden and Policy Implications : The findings reveal that women shoulder a dual burden of paid employment and unpaid household work. Although female participation in paid work has increased, women continue to spend considerably more time on unpaid domestic and caregiving activities than men.

Time use statistics



Source: Time Use Survey 2024 (Indian Economic Survey 2025-26)

Time Use Pattern and Female Labour Force Participation : The findings of the Time Use Survey (TUS) 2024 reveal that women continue to bear a disproportionately higher burden of unpaid household and caregiving responsibilities than men, despite improvements in female labour force participation. Women spend an average of 363 minutes per day on unpaid activities, compared to 123 minutes for men. Conversely, men spend 412 minutes per day on paid work, whereas women spend 302 minutes. When paid and unpaid work are combined, women devote 433 minutes per day to work-related activities, exceeding the 412 minutes spent by men. These findings clearly demonstrate the dual burden of work faced by women, which limits their ability to participate fully in paid employment.

These findings complement the earlier discussion on the Time Use Survey 2024, which showed that female participation in employment-related activities has increased from 21.8 per cent in 2019 to 25 per cent in 2024, although it remains significantly lower than that of men. The unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities continues to be one of the major barriers to increasing female labour force



participation. Therefore, reducing women's unpaid work burden is essential for improving their access to employment and enhancing their economic empowerment.

Recognizing these challenges, the Economic Survey 2024–25 highlights the care economy as a key avenue for increasing female labour force participation. It recommends measures such as flexible work arrangements, expansion of childcare facilities and crèches, industry-oriented skill development programmes, removal of statutory restrictions on women's employment, and long-term investments in women's education and economic opportunities. Several states have already introduced labour market reforms by permitting women to work in night shifts and removing restrictions on employment in certain industries. These policy initiatives can create a more supportive environment for women entrepreneurs, including those operating beauty parlours, which provide flexible, skill-based, and low-investment employment opportunities.

15. Conclusion

The present study concludes that the beauty parlour industry has emerged as a dynamic and rapidly growing segment of the service sector, with particular significance for women's entrepreneurship and employment generation in Bihar. Beauty parlours require relatively low initial investment, are skill-intensive rather than capital-intensive, and offer flexible working conditions, making them especially suitable for women who must balance paid work with household responsibilities. The findings show that these enterprises not only create direct jobs for beauticians, hair stylists, makeup artists, spa therapists, and support staff but also generate indirect employment for cosmetic suppliers, trainers, photographers, event managers, and allied services, thereby contributing to local economic development. Through income generation, skill development, and enhanced self-confidence, beauty parlours have become an important instrument of women's economic empowerment and social mobility in both urban and rural areas.

The analysis of labour force participation highlights the urgency of strengthening such women-friendly enterprises in Bihar. The female labour force participation rate in the state is only 10.90 per cent, far below the national average of 29 per cent, while the overall LFPR in Bihar (34.57 per cent) also lags behind the national figure of 54 per cent. In contrast, male LFPR in Bihar (72.20 per cent) is close to the all-India average of 73 per cent, underlining that the labour market exclusion is disproportionately borne by women rather than by men. These stark gender gaps, corroborated by evidence from the Time Use Survey 2024 on women's heavy engagement in unpaid domestic and care work, point to deep-rooted socio-cultural constraints that limit women's access to formal employment and income-earning opportunities. In this context, the expansion of beauty parlour enterprises offers a practical pathway to raise female labour force

participation by creating locally accessible, socially acceptable, and flexible avenues of self-employment and wage employment for women.

The study further establishes that beauty parlours are not merely sites of cosmetic services but also important nodes of socio-economic transformation at the local level. By improving household income, enhancing women's financial independence, and increasing their role in family decision-making, these enterprises contribute to poverty reduction, strengthening of the local service economy, and the development of local markets. Government-supported skill development programmes, vocational training in beauty and wellness, and the growing influence of digital and social media have collectively expanded the demand for beauty services and encouraged more women to enter this sector as entrepreneurs and skilled workers.

At the policy level, the findings suggest that targeted interventions to support beauty parlour enterprises—such as easier access to credit, subsidised training, formal certification, incubation support, and inclusion of beauty and wellness in skill missions—can significantly amplify their contribution to women's empowerment and inclusive growth in Bihar. Strengthening institutional linkages between training institutes, financial institutions, and local self-government bodies can further professionalise this industry and improve working conditions and earnings for women workers. While the study relies primarily on secondary data and sectoral analysis, it underlines the need for future micro-level surveys on income, working conditions, and constraints faced by women beauty-parlour owners and workers in different regions of Bihar. Such evidence would help design more nuanced policies so that beauty parlours can function as effective engines of women's entrepreneurship, enhanced labour force participation, and sustainable local economic development.

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