



ROLE OF EDC (ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT CELL) IN CREATING ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM IN HEI IN PUNE

Manisha Rajpurohit

M.Com Part-2, St. Mira's College for Girls Pune, India

Email: manisha.rajpurohit2509@gmail.com

Dr. Dimple Buche

Associate Professor, St. Mira's College for Girls Pune, India

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Abstract

The study examined the role of Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs) in creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Pune. It focused on how EDCs support entrepreneurship through various entrepreneurship development activities such as workshops, mentorship, and funding. The research aimed to find the correlation between the resources provided by EDCs and Entrepreneurship development in HEIs in Pune City. Data were collected from 100 respondents who engaged with EDC initiatives using a structured questionnaire. The findings indicated that EDCs significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial skills by providing resources, networking opportunities, and practical training. However, challenges such as limited funding, low student participation, and insufficient institutional support were noted. The study concluded that strengthening industry collaboration, increasing funding, and improving student outreach could enhance the impact of EDCs. Overall, the research confirmed that EDCs play a vital role in fostering entrepreneurship, contributing to innovation and economic growth in Pune.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC), Entrepreneurship Development.*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship goes beyond starting a business—it's about identifying opportunities, overcoming challenges, and transforming ideas into impactful ventures. It fuels innovation, leadership, and economic growth. A strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, comprising

policymakers, investors, academic institutions, mentors, and industry experts, plays a vital role in supporting aspiring entrepreneurs by providing resources, collaboration, and guidance.

Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are key players in this ecosystem. They bridge the gap between theory and practice through mentorship, skill-building programs, and hands-on experience, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among students.

In Pune, a leading educational and industrial hub, EDCs have significantly shaped the entrepreneurial landscape. Through workshops, competitions, and industry collaborations, they provide students with the platform to refine their ideas and build successful ventures, driving innovation and economic progress.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN INDIA

Entrepreneurship education in India has grown significantly with initiatives like 'Startup India.' However, there is still a gap between academic knowledge and its real-world application. Many students struggle to turn their ideas into successful businesses due to limited guidance, mentorship, and financial support. To bridge this gap, it is essential to create a strong collaborative network between educational institutions, industries, and government bodies. This will help in building a supportive ecosystem that nurtures and empowers aspiring entrepreneurs.

Importance and Need of EDC in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

Entrepreneurship Development Cells help students develop an entrepreneurial mindset by fostering creativity, risk-taking, and problem-solving skills to tackle business challenges. They bridge academic learning with practical experience through hands-on training, workshops, and industry exposure. By connecting students with mentors, industry experts, and funding opportunities, EDCs provide essential support for entrepreneurial growth. They also promote self-employment by offering incubation support, financial aid, and networking opportunities. Additionally, they strengthen leadership skills by enhancing decision-making, problem-solving, and management abilities, which are crucial for business success.

Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs) play a crucial role in empowering aspiring entrepreneurs by providing mentorship, guidance, and essential resources. They bridge skill gaps through hands-on training, encourage innovation, and promote self-reliance by supporting startups and reducing job dependency. In higher education, EDCs foster an entrepreneurial mindset, encourage risk-taking, and enhance problem-solving skills. They offer practical business exposure, support campus-based startups, and transform institutions into innovation

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hubs. By nurturing these ventures, EDCs drive job creation and contribute to economic growth at both local and national levels.

Benefits of Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs):

- **Encouraging Innovation:** EDCs provide a platform for students to develop creative ideas and find practical solutions to real-world problems.
- **Hands-On Business Learning:** Through workshops and mentorship programs, EDCs offer students real-world exposure to develop and apply their business skills.
- **Expanding Professional Networks:** EDCs connect students with industry experts, mentors, and investors, helping them build valuable relationships for their entrepreneurial journey.
- **Accessing Financial Support:** Many EDCs assist students in securing funding by linking them with investors and venture capitalists interested in new business ideas.
- **Boosting Confidence and Leadership:** EDC activities enhance students' leadership skills and self-confidence, preparing them to handle entrepreneurial challenges effectively.

Role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in fostering entrepreneurship:



Fig. 1. Role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Promoting Entrepreneurship

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a key role in shaping future entrepreneurs by developing problem-solving, leadership, and critical thinking skills. Through Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs), they provide mentorship, connecting students with experienced professionals who help turn ideas into businesses. HEIs encourage innovation by promoting creative thinking and interdisciplinary learning to address real-world challenges. They also build strong networks by facilitating collaboration with faculty, industry experts, and business leaders. By offering funding, incubation centers, and industry partnerships, HEIs provide

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essential resources to support startups. Integrating entrepreneurship into education fosters a culture where students are inspired to explore business opportunities.

Factors affecting entrepreneurship growth:

Entrepreneurship growth depends on multiple factors that influence the success and sustainability of businesses. Key aspects such as:

- **Access to Funds:** Entrepreneurs need financial support from banks, investors, or government schemes to start and expand their businesses.
- **Education and Skills:** Business knowledge in areas like management and marketing helps entrepreneurs make better decisions and handle challenges.
- **Government Policies:** Supportive rules, tax benefits, and easy business regulations create a favorable environment for startups.
- **Market Demand:** Understanding customer needs and market trends helps businesses succeed and grow.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Using new technology improves efficiency, encourages creativity, and helps businesses stay competitive.

Review of Literature:

A Review of Literature is a summary of existing research on a particular subject. It aims to explore previous studies, identifies gaps, and lays the groundwork for present and new research. The insights from various sources, their important findings, explain how the current study relates to the past work in the area of research. By contextualizing the study's background, building a theoretical framework, review of literature ensures clarity and direction. Additionally, it guides methodology, strengthens arguments with credible sources, and contributes to academic advancements.

Jayashree Upadhye and Arwah Madan (2012) Explore how entrepreneurship empowers low-income women in urban India, particularly in Pune. It fosters confidence, financial independence, and social mobility despite social barriers. NGOs offer mentorship, but true empowerment lies in financial control and reshaping societal roles. **Saurabh Doshi et al. (2013)** Highlight post-independence, India built globally recognized institutions in science, technology, and education, producing skilled professionals for economic growth. Entrepreneurship drives innovation, resource management, and market solutions, while the economy shifts from agriculture to service sectors like banking and communication. **Amit Kumar Dwivedi and Mitali Tiwari (2013)** Highlight how EDPs help reduce unemployment and poverty while supporting inclusive growth. EDIs train entrepreneurs, but small businesses

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face challenges competing with large companies. A National Policy on Entrepreneurship can help strengthen the support system. **Ms. Yogita Sharma (2013)** Explored the role of women entrepreneurs in India, highlighting challenges like education, social barriers, legal issues, and financial constraints. Despite these, many start businesses. Government initiatives from the 7th to 9th Five-Year Plans offer support. With family, societal, and policy backing, women can drive economic growth. **Jadhawrao Madhavi Sugaraj and Dr. Salve P.S. (2014)** Look into the rise of women entrepreneurs in India, especially in Pune, and the challenges they face. Despite growth, limited support hinders progress. Strengthening small businesses requires collaboration among government, financial institutions, and educational bodies while addressing social and regional barriers. **R.J. Khaire (2016)** Examines Entrepreneurship Development Cells in Maharashtra's management institutes, noting their limited effectiveness in smaller cities. While initiatives like Make in exist, many cells focus on formal activities without real impact. Enhancing practical skill-building is essential for genuine entrepreneurial progress. **Dr. V. S. Dhekale (2016)** Explores how Self-Help Groups support rural women by enhancing financial independence and skills. However, challenges like funding, social barriers, and education persist. Providing low-interest loans and training can strengthen women-led businesses and drive economic growth **Sanjeev Prashar et al. (2018)** Study the challenges of women entrepreneurs in India, highlighting financial struggles, social norms, and limited resources. Despite progress, their representation remains low, requiring more support in finance and technology. **Dr. Minakshi Tripathi (2021)** Explores how entrepreneurship education builds decision-making, risk-taking, and problem-solving skills. A survey shows EDCs support both genders equally, fostering creativity. Despite challenges like time constraints and limited resources, it plays a key role in inspiring entrepreneurs. **Dr. Rohit Kandakatla, et al. (2021)** Examines the 2020 Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, highlighting policies such as the National Startup and Innovation Policy, NEP, and Smart India Hackathon. These efforts encourage entrepreneurship in education, driving innovation, collaboration, and economic progress. **Meghna Bandi (2022)** Studies entrepreneurship growth in Indian colleges, driven by startups and student interest. Institutions collaborate with government and industry, focusing on awareness, mentorship, and skill development. **Archana M S, et al. (2022)** Examine how globalization and liberalization influence women's entrepreneurship, emphasizing risk-taking, family support, and education. While Southern India has more women-led industries, social and financial challenges remain. It recommends Women Study Centers for mentorship and further **Jothipaul Suresh Kumara and Devasahayam Shobanab (2023)** Study challenges in

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entrepreneurship education in Northeast India, such as low awareness and financial barriers. Government and industry efforts support entrepreneurs, especially women, to drive growth. **Yagbala Kapil, et al. (2023)** Study the effects of globalization and liberalization on women's entrepreneurship, emphasizing challenges like financial and social barriers. Establishing Women Study Centers in technical colleges can provide mentorship and training. Strengthening education and support systems can empower more women to succeed in business.

Research Gap: As seen in the review of literature above, while numerous studies have explored the role of Entrepreneurial Development Cells (EDCs) in higher education institutions (HEIs), there is limited research on their impact in shaping Pune's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Existing literature focuses on specific aspects like training and funding but lacks a holistic view of how EDCs contribute to mentorship, industry collaboration, and skill development. This study aims to bridge that gap by analyzing the accessibility and effectiveness of these resources in fostering entrepreneurship among students in Pune's HEIs.

Research Methodology: This study adopts a deductive approach, applying established theories on entrepreneurial ecosystems and EDCs in HEIs to analyze their impact on student participation, entrepreneurial growth, and the effectiveness of these initiatives. It tests predefined hypotheses using empirical data, ensuring a structured and objective analysis. The study is descriptive as it examines the role of EDCs in fostering entrepreneurship in HEIs, analyzing trends and their impact

on students. It is also exploratory, identifying challenges, gaps, and opportunities to enhance EDC initiatives for better entrepreneurial growth. Further, the researcher has attempted to quantify certain aspects under study and analyzed the numerical data for logical conclusions.

Data Collection:

Population for the Study: Students actively participating in EDC programs in HEIs of Pune City form the population for this study.

A **sample** of 100 was collected from individuals aged 18 to 35 years who have engaged with the Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC). *The researcher has used* Simple Random Sampling, where respondents were selected randomly from the population.

Tools for Data Collection: The study includes both Secondary and Primary methods of data Collection.

- Secondary Data was collected from websites, articles, journals and other relevant publications. A survey-based research design was used wherein the primary data was

collected through structured questionnaire. The data was collected from students involved in entrepreneurship-related activities.

- Primary Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire shared through Google Forms, which included closed-ended questions for specific responses and Likert scale questions to measure opinions and perceptions.

Data Analysis Tools: The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and visually presented through bar charts and pie charts for clear interpretation.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the meaning of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
- To explore the purpose of establishment of EDC in HEIs
- To identify the activities undertaken by EDCs
- To examine the challenges faced EDCs to create Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Hypothesis

(H₀): There is no significant correlation between the resources provided by EDCs and Entrepreneurship Development in Pune's higher education institutions.

(H₁): There is a significant correlation between the resources provided by EDCs and Entrepreneurship Development in Pune's higher education institutions.

Scope of the Study

This study examines the contribution of Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs) in creating an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem within Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Pune. Entrepreneurial Ecosystem includes: how EDCs organize activities such as workshops, training sessions, mentorship, and funding to inspire entrepreneurship among students. The research will include both public and private HEIs in Pune, aiming to understand how they support student-run startups and promote innovation. Further, it examines the types of activities organized by EDCs, such as workshops, training programs, and mentoring, in Pune's HEIs the study also examines student awareness and participation in EDC initiatives, identifying factors influencing engagement levels. It also explores the challenges faced by EDCs in effectively supporting aspiring entrepreneurs and suggests improvements to enhance their impact.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Demographic profile of respondents:

Age:

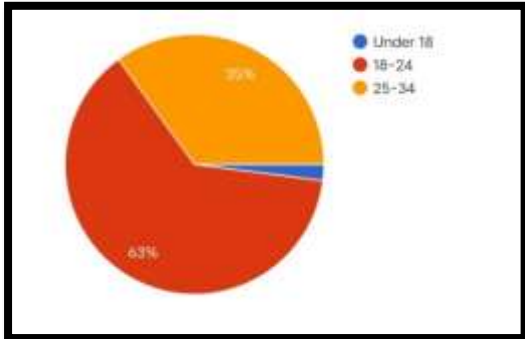


Fig.2. AGE.

- 63% belong to the **18-24 age group**, while 35% fall within the 25-34 category. The under-18 category has a minimal

Gender:

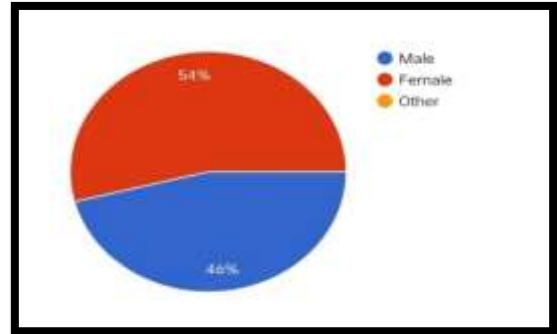


Fig.3.

Gender

- nearly equal split, with 54% female and 46% male respondents, indicating balanced participation.

Respondents Educational Qualification:

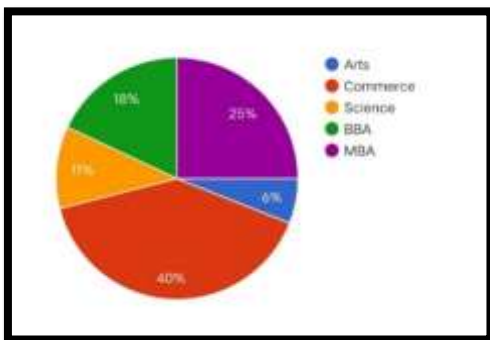


Fig.4. Educational Qualification

- The majority of respondents have a Commerce background (40%), followed by MBA (25%) and Science (18%), indicating strong participation from business and management

Respondents Institution Type:

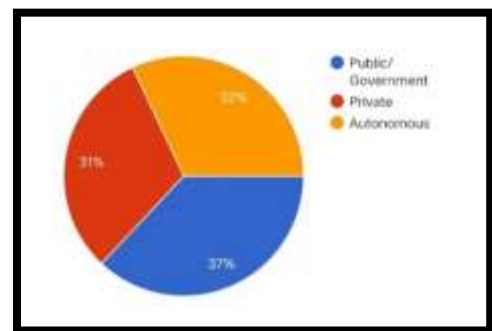


Fig.5. Respondents Institution Type

- The data represents respondents from different institution types, with 37% from Public/Government institutions, 32% from Autonomous institutions, and 31% from Private institutions.

❖ **Creation of Awareness about EDC in the Institution:**

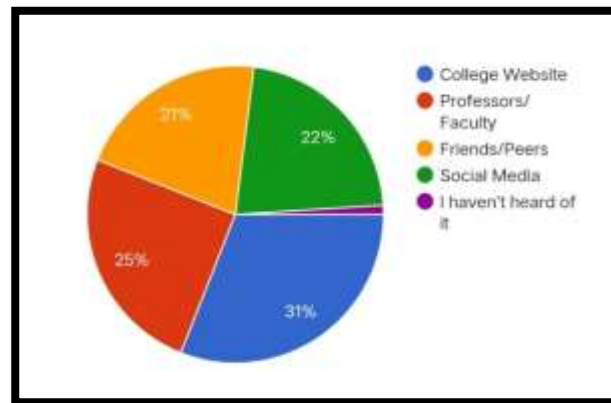


Fig.6. Creation of Awareness about EDC in the Institution

Analysis: The data highlights how students learn about the Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC). The college website is the primary source (31%), followed by professors/faculty (25%), social media (22%), and friends/peers (21%). A small percentage of students remain unaware of the EDC.

❖ **Membership in the Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) in Institutions:**

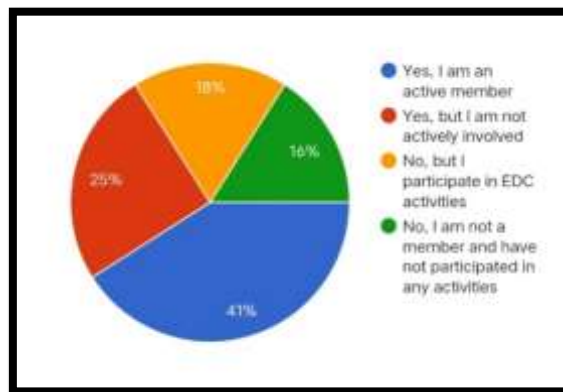


Fig.7. Membership in the Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) in Institutions

Analysis: A significant portion, 41%, are active members, demonstrating strong engagement. Another 25% have enrolled but are not actively involved. Meanwhile, 18% of students, though not members, participate in EDC activities. Lastly, 16% have neither joined nor taken part in any activities. This distribution reflects varying levels of awareness and involvement in entrepreneurial initiatives within the institution.

❖ Participation in EDC Activities at the Institution

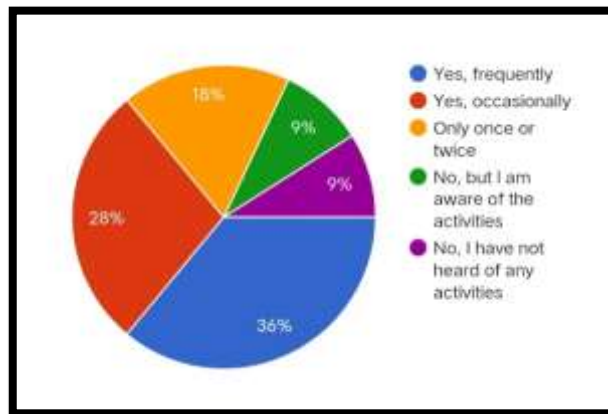


Fig.8. EDC Activities Organized

Analysis: The data shows that 36% of students frequently participate in EDC activities, while 28%

join occasionally and 18% have attended once or twice. However, 9% are aware but haven't participated, and another 9% have never heard of them. This highlights strong involvement but also a need to boost awareness.

❖ Participation in EDC Activities:

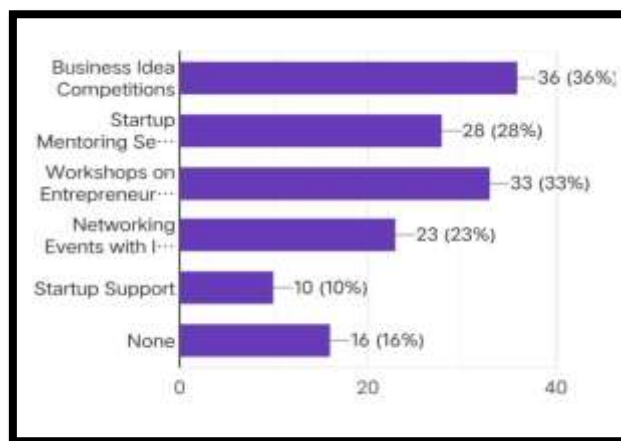


Fig.9. EDC Activities: Participation

Analysis: The analysis shows strong student participation in EDC activities, with 36% in Business Idea Competitions, 33% in workshops, 28% in mentoring, and 23% in networking. However, only 10% sought startup support, and 16% did not participate, indicating a need for greater outreach.

❖ Student Perspective on EDC's Impact on Entrepreneurship

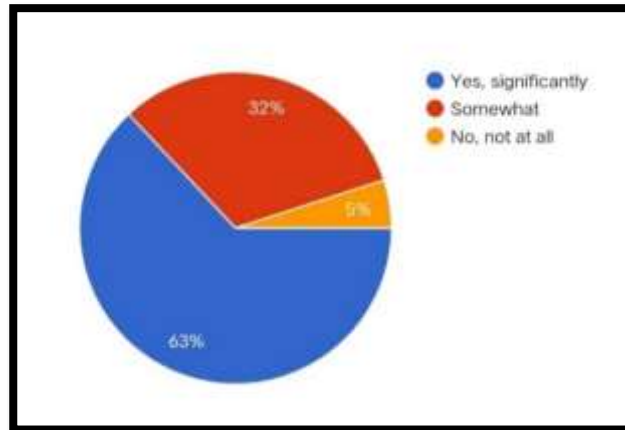


Fig.10. Student Perspective on EDC's Impact on Entrepreneurship

Analysis: The data shows that 63% of students believe the EDC has greatly supported entrepreneurship, while 32% feel it has helped to some extent. However, 5% see no impact, indicating a need for better outreach and support. Enhancing mentorship and practical guidance could further improve its effectiveness.

❖ Student Perception of Institution's EDC in Encouraging Entrepreneurship

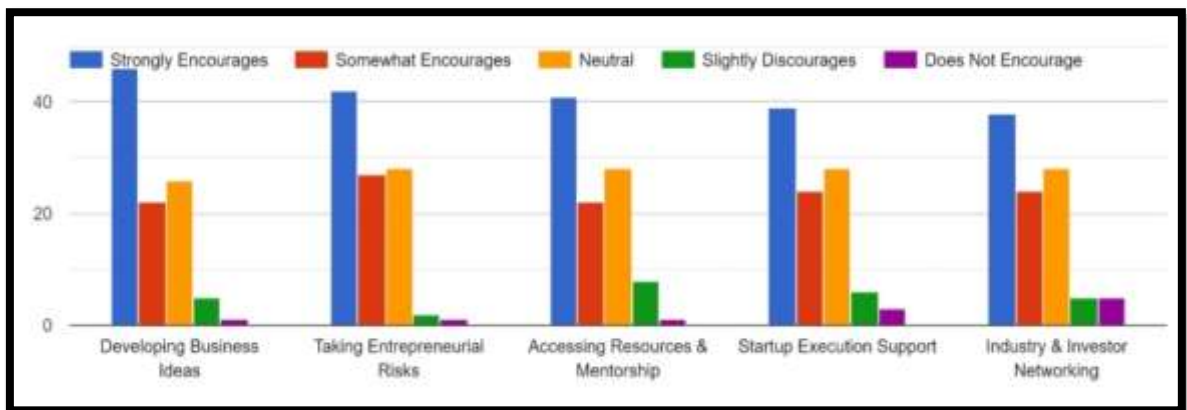


Fig.11. Student Perception of Institution's EDC in Encouraging Entrepreneurship

Analysis: The Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) of the institution plays a key role in fostering entrepreneurship. 45% of students feel it strongly encourages developing business ideas, taking risks, accessing resources, executing startups, and networking. 25% believe it somewhat encourages these aspects, while 20% remain neutral. However, 7% feel it slightly discourages, and 3% think it does not encourage these entrepreneurial activities. These insights highlight the EDC's impact and areas for improvement.

❖ Extent of Support Provided by the Institution's EDC

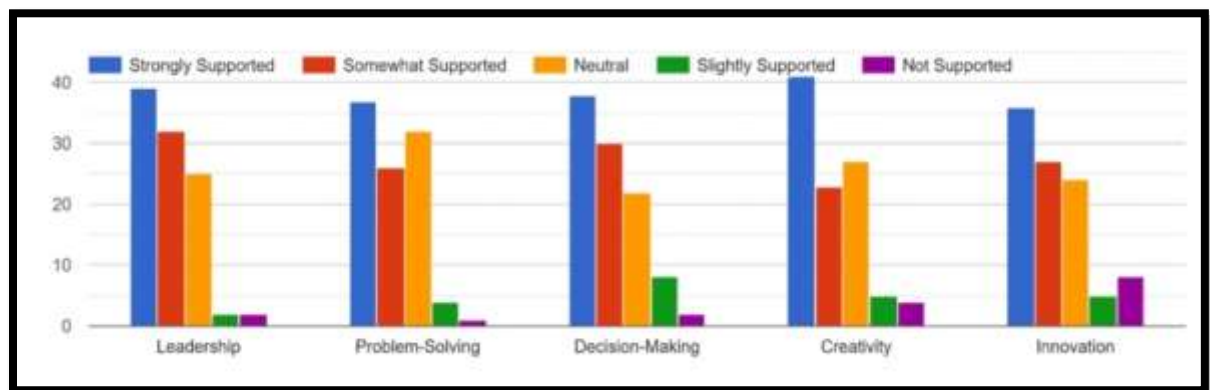


Fig.12. Extent of Support Provided by the Institution's EDC

Analysis: The analysis of the EDC's support in various areas shows that Leadership (40%), Problem-Solving (38%), Decision-Making (39%), Creativity (37%), and Innovation (36%) received strong support. Somewhat supported responses ranged between 25-30% across all areas. Neutral responses were around 20-25%, while slightly supported and not supported were minimal, approximately 2-5%. These findings highlight the EDC's overall positive impact while indicating areas for further improvement.

❖ Actions and Activities Undertaken by the EDC in the Institution

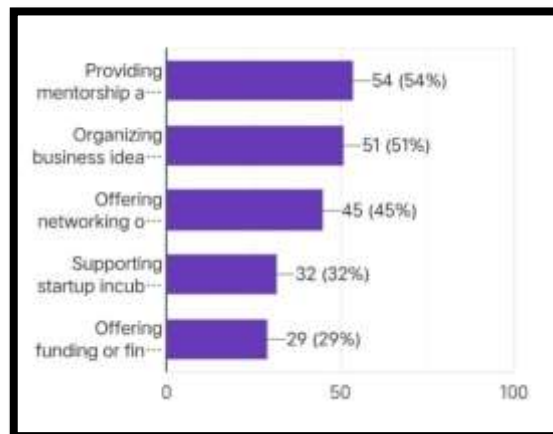


Fig.13. Actions and Activities Undertaken by the EDC in the Institution

Analysis: The data indicates that EDCs play a key role in supporting entrepreneurship. Mentorship is the most common initiative (54%), followed by business idea competitions (51%) and networking opportunities (45%). Additionally, 32% benefit from startup incubation, while 29% receive financial support, helping students innovate, connect with industry experts, and build ventures.

❖ Most Beneficial Resources by EDC for Aspiring Entrepreneurs

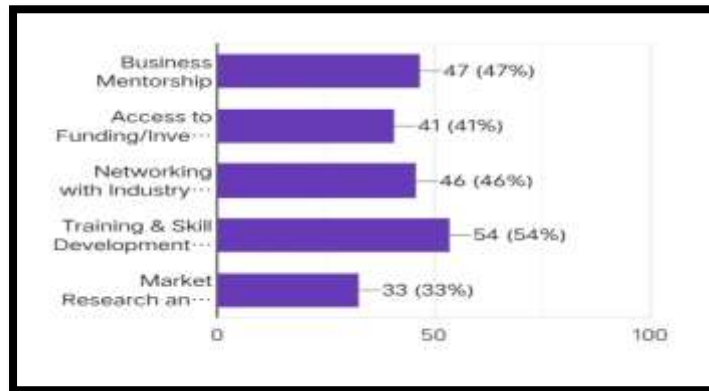


Fig.14. Most Beneficial Resources by EDC for Aspiring Entrepreneurs

Analysis: Training & Skill Development (54%) is the most valued, followed by Business Mentorship (47%) and Networking (46%). Funding access (41%) is important, while Market Research (33%) is less prioritized, highlighting the need for skill-building and mentorship.

❖ Effectiveness of EDC in Supporting Students' Entrepreneurial Growth

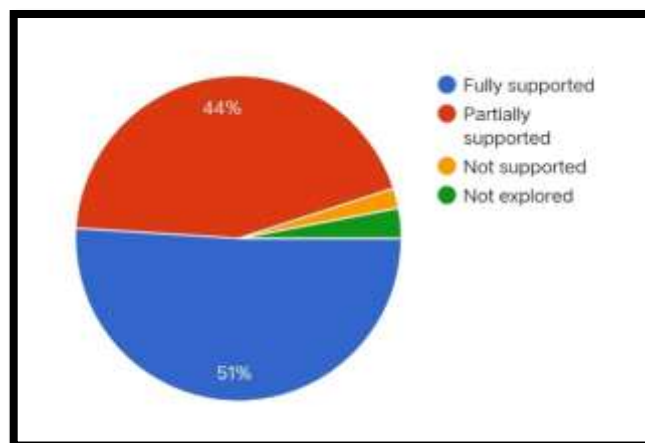


Fig.15. Effectiveness of EDC in Supporting Students' Entrepreneurial Growth

Analysis: The data shows that the EDC has been instrumental in supporting student entrepreneurs, with 51% reporting full support and 44% partial support. However, a small percentage indicated either no support or lack of awareness, highlighting the need for improved outreach and assistance.

❖ Challenges Faced while Participating in EDC Activities

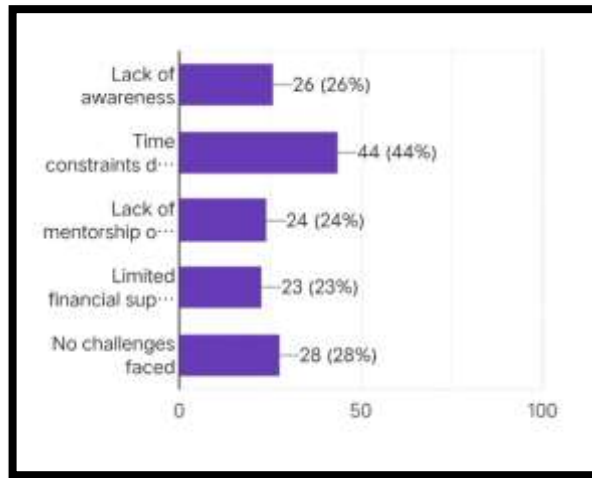


Fig.16. Challenges Faced while Participating in EDC Activities

Analysis: The analysis reveals that time constraints (44%) were the biggest challenge for students in EDC activities, followed by a lack of awareness (26%), mentorship (24%), and financial support (23%). However, 28% faced no challenges. Enhancing mentorship, funding, and awareness can improve participation.

❖ Key Challenges in Building a Strong Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in the Institution

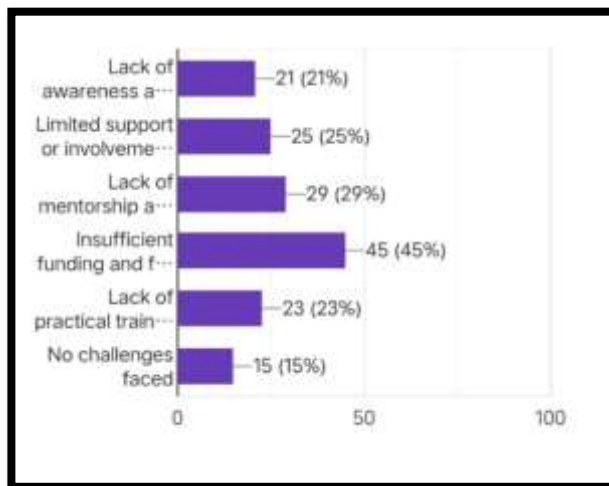


Fig.17. Key Challenges in Building a Strong Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in the Institution

Analysis: The study reveals that insufficient funding (45%) is the biggest challenge in building a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. Lack of mentorship (29%), limited institutional support (25%), and inadequate practical training also hinder progress. However, 15% of students reported no challenges. Strengthening financial support, mentorship, and hands-on training can significantly improve the entrepreneurial environment.

❖ Key External Stakeholders for Enhancing EDC Effectiveness

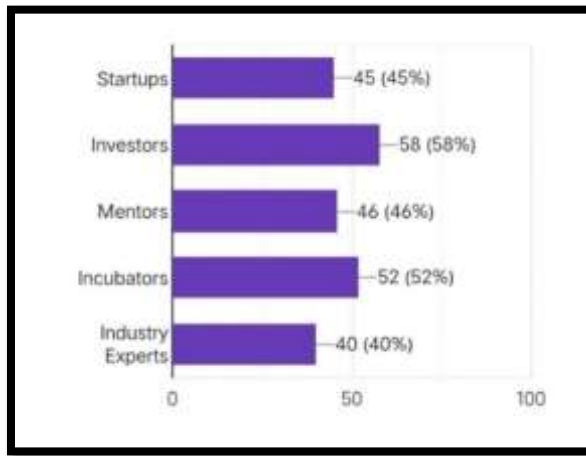


Fig.18. Key External Stakeholders for Enhancing EDC Effectiveness

Analysis: The analysis highlights that investors (58%) and incubators (52%) are the most preferred collaborators for enhancing EDC effectiveness. Mentors (46%), startups (45%), and industry experts (40%) also play a vital role by providing guidance and practical insights. Strengthening these partnerships can create a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

❖ Satisfaction with EDC Facilities and Resources for Entrepreneurship Support

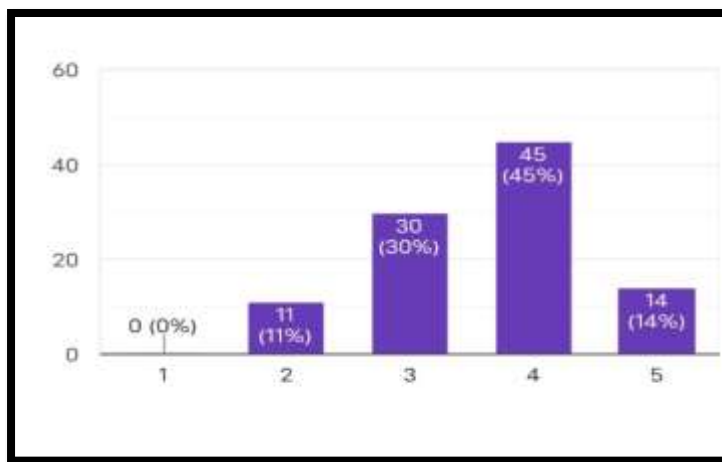


Fig.19. Satisfaction with EDC Facilities and Resources for Entrepreneurship Support

The analysis indicates that 45% of respondents are satisfied with the facilities and resources provided by the EDC, while 30% see scope for improvement. Only 14% rated their experience as highly satisfactory, and 11% expressed some dissatisfaction. The absence of the lowest rating suggests a generally positive perception, but further enhancements could strengthen support for entrepreneurship.

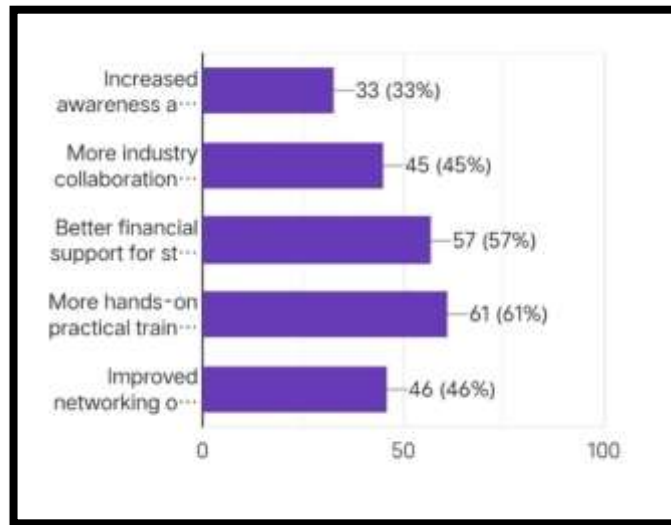
❖ **Suggestions for Enhancing the Effectiveness of EDCs**

Fig.20. Suggestions for Enhancing the Effectiveness of EDCs

The data highlights key areas for improving EDCs, with 61% emphasizing hands-on training and 57% seeking better financial support. Industry collaboration (45%) and improved networking (46%) were also identified as essential. Additionally, 33% suggested increasing awareness. Strengthening these aspects can significantly enhance the effectiveness of EDCs.

Findings:

- Entrepreneurship interest is high among HEI students in Pune, especially those aged 18-24 (63%). Participation from 25-34-year-olds (35%) suggests continued involvement, while minimal participation from those under 18 indicates structured exposure begins in higher education. Both male and female students actively participate in entrepreneurial activities. Commerce and MBA students show strong entrepreneurial inclinations, but interest from BBA (28%), science (24%), and arts (18%) students indicates a shift towards interdisciplinary entrepreneurship. Interest spans across public (37%), private (31%), and autonomous (32%) institutions, indicating the need for specific support across different academic settings.
- Key sources of EDC awareness are: college website (31%) and faculty (25%) are, with peer networks and social media also playing a role. Stronger online outreach and student engagement strategies could enhance participation. While 41% are actively involved in EDC activities, 25% are members but not participating, and 16% are not part of EDC. A lack of awareness and engagement strategies may limit broader participation.

- Students engage mostly in competitions (56%) and workshops (48%), but lower participation in startup support programs (29%) suggests a gap in direct entrepreneurial assistance. More mentorship and funding opportunities are needed. Further, Students feel encouraged in business idea development, but neutral and negative responses in resource access and mentorship indicate areas for improvement, especially in funding and networking support.
- The study indicates need for more specific initiatives as responses activities strongly support to develop Leadership (52%), decision-making (47%), and innovation skills (44%) are fostered, but some students (22%) remain neutral.
- On challenges front: Time constraint in balancing academics and entrepreneurship (44%) is revealed as the biggest challenge followed by Lack of awareness (38%), mentorship (33%), and financial support (29%) also hinder participation. The respondents also indicate 'Insufficient funding' (45%) and lack of mentorship (29%) are major hurdles.
- Students prefer collaborations with investors (58%) and incubators (52%) for funding and infrastructure, while mentors (46%) and startups (45%) provide valuable guidance.

While 45% rate their EDC experience positively, only 14% are highly satisfied, indicating a need for better funding, mentorship, and hands-on opportunities. Hands-on training (61%) and financial support (57%) are key demands. Better networking (46%) and industry collaborations (45%) can further strengthen entrepreneurial initiatives. Limited awareness (33%) highlights the need for stronger promotion strategies.

Conclusion:

Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs) play a key role in developing an entrepreneurial mindset by connecting academic learning with practical business experiences. They equip students with essential knowledge, resources, and industry networks, enabling them to transform ideas into successful ventures. Through mentorship, workshops, and hands-on training, EDCs help students build confidence, enhance creativity, and develop self-reliance.

However, financial limitations, insufficient institutional support, and low student involvement affect their overall impact. Strengthening industry collaborations, increasing funding, and improving student outreach can enhance their effectiveness. A well-supported EDC not only cultivates future entrepreneurs but also contributes to economic growth by fostering innovation, leadership, and job creation.

The study findings indicate a significant relationship between the resources provided by EDCs and entrepreneurship development in Pune's higher education institutions. This leads to the

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rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and confirms that EDCs play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurship.

Suggestions:

- **Strengthening Institutional Support:** Colleges should allocate more funding, improve infrastructure, and increase faculty participation to enhance the functioning of EDCs.
- **Industry Collaboration:** Collaborating with successful entrepreneurs, startups, and investors can provide students with valuable industry exposure and networking opportunities.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Including entrepreneurship-focused subjects in academic programs can encourage students to explore business ideas from an early stage.
- **Hands-on Training and Incubation Support:** Expanding practical workshops, startup incubation initiatives, and financial assistance for prototypes can help students move from idea development to execution.
- **Awareness and Participation:** Organizing frequent promotional events, competitions, and interactive sessions can increase student engagement and make EDCs more dynamic.
- **Access to Funding and Grants:** Connecting students with venture capitalists, government funding schemes, and crowdfunding opportunities can assist them in obtaining financial resources.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Establishing structured mentorship initiatives with experienced industry professionals can provide aspiring entrepreneurs with essential guidance.
- **Monitoring and Impact Assessment:** Conducting regular evaluations of EDC activities can help identify areas for improvement and enhance overall effectiveness.

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