

Women Entrepreneurs: An overview

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INTRODUCTION

The role of women in productive activities in India has been increasing over the years, however the total number of enterprises run by them is insignificantly small.

Women entrepreneurs in India represent a group of women who have broken participation. They have long stories of trails & hardships. Their task has been full of challenges. They have had to encounter public prejudices & criticism. Family opposition & social constraints had to be overcome before establishing themselves as independent entrepreneurs.

Small entrepreneurs are playing a significant role in the economic development of all the countries of the world. These enterprises help introducing various socio-economic problems encounter by people. Keeping in view this argument, government has been following the policy to increase entrepreneurship in this sector. The post-reform period has also observed sweeping change in economic policies of the government. These policies have laid more emphasis on development of human resources of the country and increase in self-employment among population in general and women in particular. The chief objective is to increase the representative of women in the field of business and to enhance their economic and social status.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At global level in advanced countries, majority of small enterprises has been managed by women. Women –owned firms represented nearly 40 percent of all firms in the United States and employed approximately 27.5 million people (NFWBO 2001). Further, women are starting businesses at faster rate than their male counterparts. It has been seen that women outnumber men by at least two times. Particularly when it comes to starting business in China. In Germany, women have created one-third of new businesses since 1990 representing more

than one million jobs. In Europe and newly independent states transition economies, women are 20 per cent of the business owners.

In Great Britain women are one-fourth of the self-employment sector, it has been observed that self-employed women are contributing in significant ways in economic health and competitiveness in countries around the world. At present 9.5 per cent of women entrepreneurs are managing small enterprises in India (GOI 2001).

Taylor and Brooksbank (1995) examined the marketing practices among small New Zealand organizations by taking a sample of 427 small business owners. Findings revealed that the small business firm looks the marketing practices differently from their larger counterparts. Breen ET. al. (1995) examined financial and family issues by taking a sample of 211 female entrepreneurs from Australia. The study highlighted that female business owners faced the problem of getting finance and started business with low initial capital. On the family front women entrepreneurs faced the problem of supervision and care for sick children.

Caputo and Dolinsky (1998) have examined the role of financial and human capital of household member to pursue self-employment among females. The analysis revealed that business knowledge and co-operation of husbands in family matters contribute a lot to pursue the business. Finding further suggested that government should provide necessary skills to women to ensure rapid growth of entrepreneurship. Punitha et. al (1999) examined the problems and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry region. A sample of 120 females enterprises were personally interviewed during the period June to July 1999 out of which 42 belonged to rural and 78 to urban areas. The problems for urban entrepreneurs are, apart from the competition from better quality products. The difficulty in getting loans. The least problems faced by both rural and urban women entrepreneurs are ignorant about schemes, distance from market and ignorant about agency and institutions.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurship in a broader sense can be described as a creative and innovative response to the environment. An entrepreneur is an innovator who introduces something new into the economy, a new method of production not yet

tested by the experience in the branch of manufacture concerned, a product with which the consumers are not familiar or lot new market hitherto unexploited and other similar innovations.

The Entrepreneur said the French economist JB say around 1800, shifts economic resources out of area of lower into an area of higher productivity and greater yields. But say's definition does not tell us who this entrepreneurs is. To Schumpeter (1961) an entrepreneur was a dynamic agent of change or the catalyst who transformed increasingly, nature and human resources into corresponding production possibilities. Whatever the definition, the basic underlying concepts seems to have remained the same. The entrepreneur always searches for a change, responds to it and exploits it as an opportunity. It connotes innovativeness, an urge to take risk in the face of uncertainties and competition with others. Thus, entrepreneurs are people who have the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities gather the necessary resources to establish the venture and to initiate appropriate action to make the venture successful. Entrepreneurs are persons who start their own new and small enterprises.

A study by the centre for entrepreneurship development Ahmedabad classified women entrepreneurs into three categories viz.

- 1 Chance entrepreneurs who have gone into business just by chance, without any preparation and due to fortuitous circumstances
- 2 Forced entrepreneurs who were forced into business because a husband or father died & did not live an Heir &
- 3 Created entrepreneurs who underwent training & planned to start business as a career.

The number of enterprises initiated and being run by women in the formal sector is small. One estimate of the number of these enterprises given by National Alliance of young Entrepreneurs is only 60,000 for the entire country.

FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

The emergence of entrepreneurs in a society depends upon closely interlinked social, religious, cultural, psychological, political and economic factors. In the first place, entrepreneurship is generated in society by individuals who for some reasons, initiate, establish, maintain and expand new enterprises. It is

observed that entrepreneurs internalize certain values and norms, from these sources. In the second place, religious, social and cultural factors also influence the individual for taking up entrepreneurial career. In some countries there is religious and cultural belief that high profit is unethical. This type of belief inhibits growth of women entrepreneurship. Thirdly, the psychological factors like high need for achievement, determination for unique accomplishment, self confidence, creativity, vision, leadership etc. promote entrepreneurship among individuals. On the other hand psychological factors like security orientation, inhibit promotion of entrepreneurship. Fourthly, the political system and also the political stability of a country influence on entrepreneurship.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ISSUES AND CONCERNS;

The openings up of national economies, the coming down of trade barriers, the constant arrival of new range of products, the introduction of ever new processes of production have greatly transformed the business of small and medium enterprises. Naturally, this has created lots of issues & concerns in the wake of their future development. Therefore, this time has come to take the review of the various issues & concern of this important economic sector. Following are the major issues which are being faced by small & medium enterprises e.g.

- 1 .Issue of women's entrepreneurship;
- 2 .Implementation of total quality management;
- 3 .Protection of environment;
- 4 .Ethics in entrepreneurship;
- 5 .Choosing a successor in family owned business

At the same time the major concerns are:

1. To meet the competition at national & international level,
2. Profitability &
3. To maintain Eco-friendly environment.

Women entrepreneurship needs to be studied for two main reasons. The first reason is that women' entrepreneurship has been recognized during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others and by being different can provide society with different solutions to management.

However, still they represent a minority of all entrepreneurs, thus there exists a market failure discriminating against women's possibility to become entrepreneurs and their possibility to become successful entrepreneurs. This market failure needs to be addressed by policy makers so that the economic potential of this group can be fully utilized.

The second reason is that the topic of women entrepreneurship has been largely neglected both in society in general and in the social sciences. Not only women have lower participation rates in entrepreneurship than men but they also generally choose to start and manage firms in different industries than men to do. The industries by women are often perceived as being less important to economic development and growth in high technology and manufacturing.

The women's business ownership is based on the proposition that women face problems some of which are in addition to or different from those met by men in starting and running business. The management of domestic commitments and child care support are two major issues which have an obvious gender dimension for all working women. Other generic business issues such as raising finance and finding clients common to, all may have less gender relationship but these may prove more difficult to overcome.

A study of Miss. Julie weeks IV Latin America (1998) showed that men's access to capital was almost double as compared to women. Women also have less management experience and most of them do see a need for technical training. MS weeks is of the opinion that Government should create offices of women's business ownership. Encourage the development of public private partnership to start women's business development centers and to conduct more statistical research on women-owned business in order to be able to qualify their economic clout.

Now a days, education has considered a key factor for developing women entrepreneurship; Kerela which has highest literacy rate in India, proved that education induces more women to become entrepreneurs. The women entrepreneurs in Kerela are now at the top of all industries right from readymade garments to high-tech computers. Today the government of India is more concerned about the overall economic development of women and for this the entrepreneurship among women has become an important issue of plan priority.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

Entrepreneurship among the women of Marathwada (according to the study of Prof. Jayant Joshi) has emerged from varied socio-economic, educational and occupational background. The analysis showed that 76 percent women entrepreneurs were from open category, 90.5 percent women entrepreneurs were married, all the respondent women entrepreneurs were below 30 years of age when married. 44.5 percent women entrepreneurs were between 20 to 30 years of age when they started their enterprises, 51 percent women entrepreneurs were less than graduate, 27.5 percent fathers of women entrepreneurs were less than graduate, 48 percent mothers of women entrepreneurs were non-matric, 25.66 percent of husbands of women entrepreneurs were professionally/technically qualified, 32.28 percent fathers-in-law were non-matric, 34.23 percent mothers-in-law were illiterate. 66 percent women entrepreneurs belonged to nuclear families. 71 percent women entrepreneurs were housewives. 37.43 percent husbands of women entrepreneurs were in Government jobs, 34.22 percent fathers-in-law of women entrepreneurs were in government job. 84.49 percent mothers-in-law of women entrepreneurs were housewives, their parents annual income was in between Rs. 50,000 to 1,00,000 (50%), their husbands annual income was in between Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,00,000 (43.31%), their annual family income was in between Rs. 1,00,000 to Rs. 2,00,000 (45%). The general problems faced by the women entrepreneurs are as follows.

- 1 Gender bias. 42 per of women entrepreneurs reported gender discrimination in their upbringing during their childhood.
- 2 Womanhood and household responsibilities.
- 3 The long cherished role of mother, housewife hampers her from devoting full time and efforts for her entrepreneurial role injustice with enterprise was ranked sixth among the conflict between entrepreneurial and domestic roles.
- 4 Society is yet to give its sanction fully to women to achieve economic independence through entrepreneurial role.
- 5 Cultural inhibitions imposed on a women at large is another barricade for her to assume entrepreneurial role.

- 6 Lack of confidence ranked second. She is yet to reach the level of confidence to do justice to the role of for entrepreneur which she has to throw away her role of being subordinate to her male counterpart. This can only be done with support and co-operation from her other half.
- 7 Among the weakness of women entrepreneurs lack of exposure is also the problem faced by the women entrepreneurs.

IMPORTANT SUGGESTIONS:

To develop the women entrepreneurship and motivate in between the women's to be the entrepreneurs following important suggestions should be considered.

As for as development of women entrepreneurship is concerned there is no dearth of entrepreneurial talent among women. What is needed is to develop a clear entrepreneurial attitude. Natural talents, aptitudes, capabilities can be multiplied through training. Training programmes should develop self-confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness, courage and risks.

To develop the women entrepreneurship, women have some strengths and some weaknesses. Training programmes should be designed in such a manner that women entrepreneurs can benefit out of their strengths and overcome their weaknesses.

For proper business and for good management there must be some agency to guide at appropriate stages. Particularly technically qualified women should strengthen their entrepreneurial qualities by receiving a good grounding in management.

There is an urgent need to educate women for taking up entrepreneurship and for stressing benefits of entrepreneurship. This awareness can be achieved through conferences, seminars, training programmes, refresher courses, awareness camps and other related activities.

Housewives as a potential source of entrepreneurship should be targeted by Governmental and other agencies. Efforts should be made to locate entrepreneurial potentialities amongst housewives and opportunities should be provided to them.

CONCLUSIONS

1. It is clear that majority of the respondents i.e. 80% and 93% of Govt and Non Govt officials respectively were of the opinion that the special incentive schemes of the Govt. to promote women Entrepreneurship are necessary and the Govt. should continue to provide them.
2. Entrepreneurship is satisfactory whereas 47% of Govt officials expressed the same opinion.20% of the Govt officials remained silent.
3. Majority of the Govt officials were of the opinion that women Entrepreneurs enter into business ventures to avail the monetary, tax and other benefits because they are really in need of them. Whereas majority of Non-Govt officials expressed that women enter Entrepreneurs into ventures just to avail these benefits either under the pressure or persuasion of the mail members of the family and are not really interested in doing any business or they are in need.
4. Only 13% of Govt officials disagree with the misuse of Govt facilities, whereas majority of Non-Govt officials agree with the misuse of the Govt facilities by the women Entrepreneurs.
5. Majority of the Govt officials (73.33%) expressed that they do not find any satisfactory difference in the level of efficiency between male and female entrepreneurs, where as the opinion of equal percentage of Non-Govt officials were of reverse opinion and expressed that there is difference in the level of efficiency between male and female entrepreneurs and Women Entrepreneurs are more efficient
6. In general both Govt. & Non-Govt officials were of the opinion that women owned units are dominated by man i.e. normally the male family members.
7. Both Govt and Non-Govt officials where of the opinion that majority of women entrepreneurs are prompt in repayment of dues in the form of principal amount or interest on money borrowed when compared to men borrowers.
8. As per the opinions of Govt officials, more than half of the units owned & managed by Women Entrepreneurs are sick to an extent of 50%.And as per the opinion of the Non-Govt officials, three fourth of

the units owned & managed by Women Entrepreneurs are sick to an extent of 75%.

9. Both Govt and Non-Govt officials i.e. majority were of the opinion that the cause of sickness of the enterprises is common for both men and women owned enterprises.
10. Majority of the officials from Gov.t and Non-Govt are of the opinion that all ventures are not suitable for women entrepreneurs.
11. Majority of the officials from Gov.t and Non-Govt. officials were of the opinion that women entrepreneurs belonging to middle class families seek assistance from the agency, only 10% of them are from high class and the remaining are from low and upper-middle class families of the society.
12. Govt. agencies consider SSLC as the general educational background but in case of Non-Gov.t agencies education is not the main criteria considered by them to provide assistance. It depends upon the aims and objectives of the agency.
13. Both Govt. and Non-Govt. officials are of the opinion that pre-training is essential for women before starting any enterprise.
14. Govt. agencies supporting women entrepreneurship have inter institutional linkages with one or more agencies which accounts to 93% and regarding Non-Govt. agencies, only 1/3rd of them have inter-institutional linkages.

For all round development of the country, development of entrepreneurship among women is essential since women comprise nearly half of the total population of the country. Planners, policy makers and administrators are making efforts to assist women entrepreneurs by providing financial assistance, concessions, training facilities, and assistance in marketing activities etc. A network of promotional agencies and institutions has been set-up for promoting women entrepreneurship as a result of this; women are increasingly opting for entrepreneurship and getting themselves economically independent and self reliant. Day-by-day, the number of women entrepreneurs is increasing. In such a background it was felt necessary to study various aspects of women entrepreneurship such as socio-economic background and motivational factors of

women entrepreneurs, their profiles, their problems, and performance of their enterprises. An effort was considered essential to analyze facilitating and constraining factors relating to women entrepreneurship in the Maharashtra.

It is healthy sign to see that participation by women in the field of self-employment is increasing. The spread is not only in the conventional industries but in a variety of modern industries too. Expansion and diversification took place in some of the industries. The study revealed that majority of women entrepreneurs (71.5%) were housewives prior to starting their enterprises. Therefore it is concluded that housewife's can be potential source of entrepreneurship.

In case of development of women entrepreneurship the first condition of giving opportunity is at a stage of near to fulfillment and the other condition of taking opportunity by the women to be entrepreneur is at a stage of take off. Society at large has not only accepted the role of women as entrepreneur but it has also created atmosphere conducive for development and emergence of women entrepreneurship

A network of promotional agencies and institutions has been set up at the national and state levels to promote women entrepreneurship through support measures in the form of policy, finance, infrastructure, training, raw material supply, marketing facilities etc. In spite of their best efforts, these agencies are unable to bring about the desired impact partly due to the lack of co-ordination among different supporting agencies and with the women entrepreneurs. It is observed that women deal with traditional activities, which were more or less feminine in nature. They generally choose activities like food products, beauty parlour services, tailoring, embroidery which fit with their stereotyped role

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