

Development of Rural Women Entrepreneurs in India: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Economic and social development of women is essential for overall economic development of society and nation. Rural women are now increasingly taking part in entrepreneurial activities and running their own businesses. Women entrepreneurship development is the tool of women's economic empowerment. Empowerment through entrepreneurial activities leads women to self-fulfillment make them conscious about their status, presence, rights and their position in the society. Women Entrepreneur", in a larger sense, therefore is a woman who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically self-reliant. Due to change in environment, now people are more comfortable to accept leading role of women in our society. This study is intended to find out various challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs and the factors influencing rural women entrepreneurs in Agra District. This present study is based on primary as well as secondary sources.

Keywords: Rural Women Entrepreneur, Economic Development, Challenges of Rural Women Entrepreneurs.

Introduction

Women constitute around half of the Indian population. They are therefore, regarded as the better half of the society. Traditionally they were confined in four walls of houses performing household activities. But now a days woman have started proving themselves in many fields including entrepreneurship and their participation in entrepreneurial activities has rapidly increased.

Women entrepreneurship is relatively a recent phenomenon which came into prominence in late the 1970's. There has been dramatic increase in the number of women setting-up in business and it has been noted that they have become the fastest growing segment with in the small business sector (Moore and Buttner 1997). Due to the favorable policies of the government, spread of education, awareness among women regarding entrepreneurship, more and more women are venturing new businesses and other useful economic activities.

Rural women are more vulnerable then urban women, because rural women do not have enough opportunities and resources to utilize their skills and economic potential whereas the urban women have wider scope of actions around them to explore. Thus if we want rural women to be a part of mainstream, they are to be given little freedom from their traditional role and favourable social environment. Rural women are having all the qualities to become a successful entrepreneur, but they feel lack of confidence on their own ability to run an enterprise especially at the initial stage. Training can muster confidence among women about their potentials and to understand that they can come out of their conventional role to attain more independent socially as well as economically. The deprived condition of women is to a large extent because of social customs which put men superior and women subordinate.

Economic and social development of women is necessary for overall economic development of society and nation. Rural women are now increasingly run their own business. so far their entrepreneurial potential, managerial skill and socio-economic contribution remain largely neglected. Women entrepreneurship development is the helpful instrument of women empowerment. Empowerment through entrepreneurial activities leads women to self-fulfillment make them conscious about their status, presence, rights and their position in the society.

Entrepreneurship refers to the act of setting up a new business or reviving an existing business so as to take advantages from new opportunities. Thus, entrepreneurs shape the economy by creating new wealth and new jobs and by inventing new products and services.

Concept of Women Entrepreneurs

The concept of women entrepreneurship is becoming a global phenomenon playing an essential role in the business community. In India, due to the orthodox and traditional socio-cultural environment, women enter into business scenario comparatively late to their male counterparts. Besides that women are taking initiatives and running their businesses successfully.

A woman entrepreneur is an adult who owns and runs an enterprise, especially a commercial one, often at personal financial risk. Women entrepreneurs are the women or a group of the women who initiate, organize and operate business enterprise. The government of India has defined women entrepreneur as "an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated by the enterprise of women".

In the words of nutshell "women entrepreneurs are those women who think of business enterprise, initiate it, organize and combine the factors of production, operate the enterprise and undertake risk and handle economic uncertainty involved in running a business enterprise".

Review of Literature

Ganesan S and Duraipandian R (1999), have explained the entrepreneurship development among rural women. They highlighted the problems viz. illiteracy, ignorance, lack of economic holdings and social sanctions etc of rural women and the remedial measures for their development. To change the social economic structure and uplift the disadvantaged section of the society like women, greater emphasis has to be given to entrepreneurial development programmes more particularly directed to women.

Ganesan.S. (2003) discussed the empirical factors which motivate women to enter into entrepreneurship and the factors which influence them to become successful. The author introduced the concept of surrogate entrepreneurs and false entrepreneurship in his study. Many social, economic and family factors have been identified and analyzed with the help of meticulously collected primary data. The author concluded that the data available on the number of women entrepreneurs is totally wrong. It has been proved that most of the women entrepreneurs in the official list are not either women or entrepreneurs.

Vijyalakshmi.T. (2007) analyzed the factors that encourage women to become entrepreneurs. She also examine cross-country comparison between U.S.A and India and found the increasing percentage of self employed women in U.S.A but the development of women entrepreneurs is expectedly low in our country. She identified the problems faced

by women entrepreneurs and the steps to promote women entrepreneurs in India. She concluded that by enabling women to become entrepreneurs and participate fully and more effectively in wider range of economic activities, it is possible not only to improve their position in society but also to make greater progress toward overall economic and social development objectives, improved distribution of income, reduction in poverty and reduction of unemployment.

Kumari Sujata, Kaushik Vandana and Lodha Neeta (2010) have studied the problems of women entrepreneurs in rural Rajasthan. The sample for their study was 60 and interview schedule was prepared for the collection of primary data. The results of the study indicate lack of supportive network, financial and marketing problems were the major problematic areas for rural women entrepreneurs. And these were discouraging factors for other rural women to initiate entrepreneurial activity.

Dr. Singh Sahab, Dr. Thakur Gaurav and Dr. Gupta P.C. (2013), illustrated the empowerment of rural women through micro entrepreneurship and the role of micro entrepreneurship among rural women. They explained that the economic empowerment of rural women directed to development of family, community, society, state and nation therefore it is very essential to give intense attention over empowerment of women in the rural area for the real development of our country in all spheres.

Dr. Jit Ravinder and Bharti Anju (2016), have explained problem and challenges of women entrepreneurs of India. They have highlighted many constraints women face. These constraints are related to psycho- social factors, legal and policy framework, support services like financing, training, technology, information, and production and marketing of product and services have been discussed. They suggested through their study that government, the policy makers, the financial institutions, the law makers, the family and the society at large has to remove all the obstacles that can hinder the enhancement of women's potential business insight. The support and encouragement provided by all these agencies can open new possibilities for women entrepreneurs and hence for the nation's economy.

Singh Joginder and Seema (2017), have highlighted the challenges for rural women in India. They explained that women entrepreneurs face many problems like less education and awareness, family conflict, managerial issues, problem of mobility, socio-cultural barriers, and problem in arranging finance and raw material, which come in the way of women entrepreneurs and suggested for improving their situation.

Objectives of the Paper

1. To critically examine the challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs of Agra District.
2. To evaluate the factors responsible for encouraging rural women of Agra District to become entrepreneurs

Research Methodology

The current study has been taken up on the basis of primary as well as secondary data. The study is based on development of rural women entrepreneurs. A structured interview schedule was used for primary data collection. The area of the study was Agra District. There are fifteen blocks in Agra District of Uttar Pradesh namely, Achanera, Akola, Bah, BarauliAhir, Bichpuri, Etmadpur, Fatehabad, FathepurSikri, Jagner, Jaitpur Kalan, Khandauli, Kheragarh, Pinahat, Saiyan, Shamsabad. Five blocks were randomly selected. 20 rural women entrepreneurs were purposely interviewed from the selected blocks.

Blocks	No. of Respondents
Achanera	3
Bah	6
Bichpuri	2
Fatehabad	2
Shamshabad	4
Total	20

The information, thus obtained was analyzed according to the objectives of the study, coded and tabulated. The result has been in the form of numbers and percentage. The secondary data required for the study have been collected from various books, magazines and journals (various issues).

Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents
(Table 1)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
21-25	3	15
26-30	5	25
31-35	3	15
36-40	1	5
41-45	4	20
46 and above	4	20
	20	100%
Education		
Illiterate	--	0
Primary Education	4	20
Middle Education	3	15
High School	5	25
Higher secondary	5	25
Graduate	3	15
	20	100%
Family Structure		
Nuclear	14	70
Joint	6	30
	20	100%
Nature of Work		
Beauty Parlour	6	30
Tailoring/Garments	8	40
Grocery/Cosmetic Shop	3	15
Tuition/Coaching Classes	3	15
	20	100%
FAMILY INCOME		
Up to 4000	5	25
4000-8000	4	20
8000-16000	7	35

16000 and above	4	20
	20	100%
Marital Status		
Married	10	50
Unmarried	6	30
Divorced	1	5
Widow	3	15
	20	100%

Challenges Faced by Rural Women (Table 2)

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Financial Constraint		
Agree	15	75
Disagree	5	15
	20	100%
Lack of Education		
Agree	14	70
Disagree	6	30
	20	100%
Lack of Mobility		
Agree	12	60
Disagree	8	40
	20	100%
Competition		
Agree	16	80
Disagree	4	20
	20	100%
Role Conflict		
Agree	13	65
Disagree	7	35
	20	100%
Overload of Work		
Agree	12	60
Disagree	8	40
	20	100%
Male Dominant Society		
Agree	16	80
Disagree	4	20
	20	100%
Infrastructure		
Agree	15	75
Disagree	5	25
	20	100%

Results demonstrated that 75% women have to face financial constraint while running their enterprise. As regards finance, women in developing nations have little access to finance. Bankers, creditors and financial institutes are not coming forward to provide financial assistance to women borrowers, due to their inability to provide tangible security. They discourage women borrowers on the belief that they can at any time leave their business and become housewives again.

Asian Resonance

As far as the illiteracy is concern, 70% rural women were agreed that lack of education confine their spirit. Rural women in India are lagging far behind in the field of education. Women are provided less or inadequate education in rural areas than their male counterpart partly due to poverty, early marriage, low socio-economic status. Lack of education is one of the biggest challenges for rural women who want to start an enterprise and run their enterprise successfully. This improper education make women entrepreneurs to remain in dark about the development of new technology, new methods of production, marketing and other governmental policies which will raise the spirit in them.

When the participants were asked about their movement constraint, 60% women said that the mobility or traveling from one place to another is one of the major handicaps for the women. In our country, mainly in rural area, women mobility is very limited and has become a problem due to traditional values of the society towards women entrepreneurs. Moving alone for business purposes by the young women entrepreneurs is still not very easy for them. Security of rural women entrepreneurs is a major challenge.

Usually women entrepreneurs employ low technology in the process of production. In a market where the competition is too high, they have to fight hard to survive in the market against the organised sector and their male counterpart who have vast experience and capacity to adopt advanced technology in managing enterprises. Female owned businesses also tend to be concentrated in less profitable and more competitive sectors such as food, garments and retail, beauty parlours. When the participants have been asked 80% women said that the chosen field of their businesses is competitive, where more and more women are indulged and giving competition to one another.

In developing countries like India women are very emotionally attached to their families they work long hours daily, carrying out family responsibilities such as cleaning, cooking, and bringing up children simultaneously concentrate on their income generating activities as well. Such family duties prevent them from becoming successful entrepreneurs. Consequently a serious conflict emerges between home and work resulting in high stress level constraining her success, independence and progress. This role conflict reflects in the study, 65% women were agreed that they have to face role conflict as well as over load of work in their business.

Indian society is a patriarchal society; women are not treated equal to men. As far as rural areas are concerned, people have a set attitude towards women that they are only for household work. Their entry to business needs the approval of the head of the family. Entrepreneurship has traditionally been seen as a male preserve and male dominated. All these put a break in the growth of women entrepreneurs. While running their enterprises women have to deal with this male dominated society, and many times that become hurdle in the success of women entrepreneurs. This notion is consistent with

the finding of the study since when participants were asked 80% women were agreed that male dominant society is one of the biggest constraints in the growth of their business.

Encouraging Factors (Table 3)

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Family Responsibility		
Agree	13	65
Disagree	7	35
	20	100%
Economic Need		
Agree	12	60
Disagree	8	40
	20	100%
Desire to be Independent		
Agree	16	80
Disagree	4	20
	20	100%
Enjoy better life		
Agree	17	85
Disagree	3	15
	20	100%
Personal Satisfaction		
Agree	20	100
Disagree	0	0
	20	100%
Desire to Utilize own skills and talent		
Agree	18	90
Disagree	2	10
	20	100%

There are two types of factors that influence women entrepreneurs in India to become entrepreneurs, Pull Factors and Push Factors. Pull factors are those which encourage women to become entrepreneurs. And push factors are those which compel women to become entrepreneurs.

The entry of women into business in India is marked out as an extension of their kitchen activities. Rural women are entering in the business activities and proving their selves as a successful entrepreneur. When the participants were asked about the factors that encouraged women to become an entrepreneur, 65% women were agreed that they have started their business due to their family responsibilities followed by financial needs 60%. Women started their businesses due to some disturbing event, such as divorce, loss of a family member, financial needs, and early family responsibilities.

Women, especially those belonging to the low-income strata and who have no other option for employment are taking to entrepreneurship not only to meet the survival needs of the family but also due to low barriers of entry and flexibility.

Apart from these factors women are coming in the entrepreneurial activities for making their identities, for getting higher statuses in the family and society. This reflects in the study as well, when participants were asked 100% women agreed that

personal satisfaction was the most important factor that encourage them followed by utilization of their own skills (90%), to enjoy better life (85%) and the desire to be independent (80%) to become an entrepreneur.

Conclusion

Present society is changing very fast with technology development, modernization, industrialization, urbanization and education development. In such conditions, employment opportunity increased significantly for rural women. The participation of women in economic activities is essential for raising the status of women in the society. Entrepreneurial activities of rural women are making women self-confident and self-sufficient. Apart from this, rural women entrepreneurs face many challenges in managing their businesses which sometimes restrict their success. But these challenges always motive them to do the best in their work. The economic status of the women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development and therefore it becomes a responsibility of the government to frame policies for development of entrepreneurship among women. Entrepreneurship among rural women, no doubt improves the wealth of the nation in general and of the family in particular. Women need encouragement and support from the family members, government, society, male counterparts etc. Women entrepreneurs are increasingly being considered as an important element for economic development. For rural women, entrepreneurship is essentially a journey out of poverty and towards equality and equity.

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