

A study on rural women entrepreneurship in Vempalli Mandal, Kadapa District, A.P. India

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Abstract

The present study aims to show that in order to improve the status of women entrepreneurship in all spheres of Indian life, the government will need to take an initiative in providing an increased pace of awareness and become meaningful providers of needed training programs especially aimed at strengthening rural women entrepreneurs. It also aims at exploring the present status of women entrepreneurs regarding their socio economic backgrounds, problems faced by them in seeking to create new ventures, motivational factors and the availability of finance for them in Vempalli Mandal, YSR District.

Key words: entrepreneurship, women, finance, skills, training.

Introduction

The population of India is roughly 987 million people of which females comprise of 48,5% of the total population. There are about 154.57 million women in the work force of which only about 6.7% are totally self-employed. Most of this 6.7% are engaged in sectors such as agriculture, tailoring and fashion design, handicraft production, handloom and a range of cottage based industries.

Entrepreneurship has been recognized as an essential ingredient for the economic growth of any country. Women are considered to be very important role players when it comes to generating income to support their families. Unfortunately, in India in general, women from lower castes and socio-economic orders have very little opportunity to obtain required funding which will allow them to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship is a critical aspect which leads women onto a path of socio-economic independence and in turn satisfies the needs and aspirations for better living standards.

The need to earn quick money is the reason why most women opt for entrepreneurial ventures. Many seek a

sense of independence and wish to utilise their time effectively. For many, their dire circumstances force them to seek work in whatever form and preferably not in their traditional roles. Many seek entrepreneurship to allow them to discover their own relevance and meaning in life. They have many anxieties and fears about starting up a venture, but Indian women of the 21st Century will have to go where others have not dared to. Many lack confidence as well as funding for start-up operations, and then of course there are many socio-cultural hurdles to pass.

Challenges facing women entrepreneurs

There are many problems facing women entrepreneurs, we highlight only a few here to set the tone of the article.

Finance:

Finance is needed to start-up any operation and in India women do not generally have property to use as collateral for obtaining funds from banks.

Males control society:

Women are generally considered as 'abla' or weak in all respects. Indian society is male dominated and women business owners are frowned upon.

Education:

In India the vast majority of women are still illiterate and thus unmotivated. Consequently, most women are not aware of business opportunities that may exist. Very volatile market conditions are also not easily seen due to lack of education.

Lack of confidence:

Many women feel insecure and thus lack confidence in their own abilities as potential entrepreneurs.

Lack of training programmes:

There is a lack of useful and free training programmes which are critical to budding entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs mostly concentrate on small and medium scale units like handloom and handicraft work, petty trades, poultry farming, dairy farming, pig farming and tailoring. Therefore, it is imperative for the government of India to support the poor women through Govt. to support such programmes by the provision of revolving funds and enabling them engage in the different entrepreneurial activities they are interested in.

Nowadays, the number of women entrepreneurs is increasing since there is a perception that it provides them with a unique opportunity to be their own boss. It is also challenging and they want to be challenged. They especially relish the notion of making more money, which often outweighs their family duties and responsibilities. Moreover, technological development empowers women to acquire more relevant qualifications and values to meet the huge demands of entrepreneurship ventures. Unequal access to education in India restricts women from acquiring even functional levels of literacy required to learn skills. Women are impeded by their lack of mobility, low literacy levels and prejudiced attitudes towards women by men. Women are neglected by many men who have preconceived ideas and stereotypes of what is considered to be a woman's work and what women are capable of doing.

The government plays an important catalytic role in helping the rural women population to mobilise their own entrepreneurship abilities by providing a facilitative environment in which the rural SHGs are allowed to grow and perform their functions more effectively to the extent that they become independent. The government also has an important capacity building role so that the SHGs develop into self-reliant organisations overtime.

Literature review

Entrepreneurship Development is a very crucial factor for the acceleration of economic development. The average Indian rural woman plays many roles in life and contributes to the well-being of her family. Despite several claims and announcement of policies about their emancipation, very few women stand empowered (Sindhu S. Narayan and P.S. Geethakutty, 2003). In most cases, lack of financial support is a bane to women to set up enterprises. Therefore, they need financial support such as micro credit which would help them to establish small cottage units like *papad* making, *'agarbatti'* manufacturing, daily trading of fruits and vegetables, etc. Micro finance as an innovative mechanism provides a variety of financial products and services aimed at helping women to build their businesses, families and communities (Susan Beaudry, 2008). Hence there is an imperative need for improving the access of rural women to utilize the resources available for ensuring their equitable place in the mainstream of economic development in India.

Methodology of the study

The study is centered around the problems of rural women entrepreneurs in the remote Indian areas of Vempalli Mandal, YSR District. A convenience sampling method was administered for selecting the sample of 25 rural women entrepreneurs from five villages located in the study area of Vempalli Mandal taken

from an existing list of women entrepreneurs in DIC. Primary data was collected through an interview method. The activities in which the sample of the respondents were involved in included tailoring, garment creation and fashion

design, beedi making, provision stores, cattle farming and handicraft production. To draw the meaningful results some of the statistical techniques were used like, mean percentages and the like.

Table 1
The village-wise distribution of a sample of women entrepreneurs

SI. No	Name of the Village	No. of Sample Women Entrepreneurs
1	Alavalapadu	05
2	Gundlapalli	05
3	Kathuluru	05
4	Vempalli	05
5	Thallapalli	05
Total		25

Source : Survey data

In order to get the inferences, the data collected were analysed with the help of statistical techniques like percentage, ratios, averages, and ranking method. The

study was mainly limited to a small group of women entrepreneurs located in Vempalli Mandal.

Data analysis and Interpretation

Table 2
Socio-economic profile of a sample of respondents

Age	No. of Sample Women Entrepreneurs	Percentage
Less than 25	03	12
26-50	17	68
Above 50	05	20
Total	25	100
Education		
Illiterates	08	32
Primary level	11	44
Secondary & above	06	24
Total	25	100
Family		
Individual family	18	72
Joint family	07	28
Total	25	100

From the above table it is evident that 68 per cent of the respondents were in the

age group of 26-50 followed by 12 per cent in *above 50* age group and 20

percent in less than 25 age groups. 68 per cent of the sample respondents were literate and the rest were illiterate. Due to the lack of basic education, many more women are not aware of business,

technology and have no or scant marketing knowledge. 72 per cent of the sample women entrepreneurs came from individual families followed by 28 per cent who emanated from joint families.

Table 3
Type of Industry

S. No.	Type of Entrepreneurial activity	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Tailoring	07	28
2	Beedi making	03	12
3	Provision stores	05	20
4	Cattle farm	08	32
5	Handicrafts	02	08
Total		25	100

Table 3 shows the type of activity engaged in by the sample women entrepreneurs. 32 per cent of the women are involved in the activity of cattle farming because of their illiteracy and 28, 12 and 8 per cent and of women are engaged the activities of tailoring, beedi making and handicrafts respectively, due to low literacy and inadequate finance problems. Only 20 per cent of women engaged in their business had secondary education and did so due to unemployment.

Table 4
Form of Organization

S. No.	Organization	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Sole proprietorship	25	100
2	Company	--	--
3	Small scale industry	--	--
4	Partnership	--	--
Total		25	100

From the above table it is clear that 100 per cent of the sample women entrepreneurs are running their businesses as sole traders, and no women entrepreneurs were identified as the owner of any other organization because of their lack of confidence, lack of financial support, family support, awareness about Govt. support and the like.

Table 5
Motivational factors to become entrepreneurs

S. No.	Motivational factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	To satisfy economic needs	02	08
2	To lead an independent life	01	04
3	To share the family burden	11	44
4	To utilize leisure time & skills	05	20

5	Government support offered	03	12
6.	Desire to do something	02	08
7	Occupational experience	01	04
8	Most of the above	20	80
Total		25	100

Table 5 demonstrates the reasons offered by women to become entrepreneurs. 44 per cent of the women entrepreneurs are involved in the businesses only for the purpose of sharing the family burden which in turn improved their economic stability and the rest had their own unique intentions as mentioned in the table. Also most of the respondents provided the answer that what motivated them most of all was what influenced their decisions to begin an enterprise.

Summary of findings

The **major findings** of the study are as follows:

- ❖ The largest groups of the women entrepreneurs were in the age group of 26-50 years, and the rest were in the bracket above 50 years. This was attributed to illiteracy and their family backgrounds.
- ❖ 72 per cent of the sample of women entrepreneurs came from individual families followed by 28 per cent from joint family setups.
- ❖ The majority of the sample respondents, i.e., 32 per cent of the women are involved in the activity of cattle farming because of their illiteracy and rural backgrounds and knowledge of agricultural methods obtained first hand.
- ❖ More than one fourth of the respondents are involved in the tailoring business because of the fact that it requires less of a

financial investment, and is considered to be an easy job and offers relatively good income.

- ❖ 100 per cent of the sample women entrepreneurs are running their businesses as sole traders and enjoy the support of their family.
- ❖ The majority of respondents started their business as it was considered to be an 'easy job' and they desired to fundamentally improve their family status.
- ❖ The majority of women entrepreneurs were dissatisfied with government policies and only a meagre 5% were remotely satisfied.
- ❖ Some of the respondents expressed their opinion to utilise their skills and leisure time with the support offered by the government.

Conclusion

Most of the sample of the respondents started their entrepreneurship initiatives through the help of SHGs. But real empowerment will be achieved only when they withstand the entrepreneurship they undertake in the long run too without depending on any others for survival. Women entrepreneurship may not only improve the economic status of their family which in turn then also uplifts society but also adds confidence, self-reliance better living and other benefits. Most of the respondents agreed that the initial capital outlay was the main financial problem faced when starting to run their business unit though SHGs are existed.

Most of the respondents preferred to do the businesses they opted for due to lack of technical and literacy skills, inadequate financial support, lack of knowledge about government as well as NGO support and special training programs.

Hence, the present study concludes that in order to improve the status of women entrepreneurship in all spheres of life in India, government will need to take the initiative by providing the increased pace of awareness and training programmes especially to strengthen rural women entrepreneurs of Vempalli Mandal. Indian women need to be empowered to face the challenges of the 21st Century and charter a new course with the aid of the government as well as NGOs.

Women should be specially targeted as a group for developmental programmers. It is imperative to improve their education and the government must provide suitable free training for women so that their latent skills can be developed. Existing women entrepreneurs skills should also be upgraded and they should be generally encouraged to make a more meaningful contribution to resolve the economic plight of their communities.

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