A STUDY ON CONSTRAINTS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF KERALA

MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

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Submitted by

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INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, Indian women have entered the field of entrepreneurship in greatly increasing numbers. The result of these trends is that women-owned businesses span the entire range of business life cycle and business success, whether the measuring stick is revenue, employment or longevity. This strengthens the view that all governmental programs and policies should target at strengthening women's entrepreneurship in their native lands. However, Women in India are faced by many problems to get ahead their life in business.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE

Women in Kerala, while establishing firm foothold in literacy and social status seem yet to identify their role in entrepreneurship. Reports by government departments and financial institutions have mentioned about constraints imposed on women entrepreneurs by their immediate environment, such as family commitments and absence of appropriate psychological disposition on the part of women themselves. Empirical evidence shows that women contribute significantly to the running of family businesses mostly in the form of unpaid effort and skills. The value of this effort is underestimated both by the families and in academic studies that take it for granted. On the other hand, many of the enterprises defined as being run by women are in fact run in their names by men who control operations and decision-making meant to reach women entrepreneurs can succeed only if they take note of this paradox. Hence the present study is an attempt to examine the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs of Kerala.

OBJECTIVES

General objective
To examine the Constraints of Women entrepreneurship in Kerala.

Specific objectives
(i) To examine the Socio-economic status of Women entrepreneurs of Kerala.
(ii)To examine the type of women enterprises of Kerala.
(iii)To understand the impact of women entrepreneurship of Kerala.
(iii) To examine the relationship between monthly profit and constrains faced by women entrepreneurs of Kerala- a comparison of Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut.

**METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF**

The present study entitled ‘A STUDY ON THE CONSTRAINTS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF KERALA” was undertaken among women entrepreneurs in order to probe into the question as to why educated women in Kerala refrain from entrepreneurial activities. A Multi stage sampling design was adopted for the selection of samples. In the first stage, Kerala was selected as the state to be studied among the states of India since Kerala is the only state in India where women outnumber men, with a sex ratio of 1050 (Census 2011 report) not only, in population but also in unemployment among the educated. In the second stage, Kerala was divided into three major cities such as Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut which represents the South, Central and North Kerala respectively. In the third stage, 50 women entrepreneurs who engage in various income generating ventures with not less than five years of experience from each of the three cities were randomly selected giving a total sample of 150 women entrepreneurs. Primary data was gathered by administering questionnaires to the sample women entrepreneurs of Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut. Direct observation and telephonic interviews were also used. Secondary data was gathered using published journals, magazines and books. Statistical tools such as One way ANOVA, percentages and graphs were used to analyse and interpret the data collected.

**MAJOR FINDINGS BASED ON OBJECTIVES**

(i) Socio-economic status of Women entrepreneurs of Kerala.

In Kerala the highest percent of women entrepreneurs (54 percent) fall in the age category of 30-40 years. The least percent of women entrepreneurs (2 percent) fall in the age category 20-30 years. 35.33 percent of the women entrepreneurs in Kerala belong to Hindu religion. 32 percent of the women entrepreneurs belong to Christian religion and 32.67 belong to Muslim religion. This would mean that the women entrepreneurs selected as samples has almost an equal representation of the three religions. 80.67 percent of the respondents are married. Only 8 percent are unmarried. It is found that 11.33 percent of the respondents are either widowed or separated. The highest percent (62) of women entrepreneurs in Kerala have attained graduation. On a comparison between Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut it is found that 34 percent of the women entrepreneurs in Calicut have completed only middle school level of education. Majority (78.67) percent of respondents belong to nuclear families whereas only 21.33 percent belong to joint families. This would indicate
the tendency of the respondents to live independently. The number of dependents above 5 in families is only 10.67 percent. 53.33 percent of the respondents’ families have less than two dependents. This would indicate that majority of the respondents do not have a burden of responsibility to take care large number of dependents in their families. Only 36 percent of the respondents have income generating ventures in their own name. This would indicate throw light on the lack of self confidence among respondents to run their business in their own names. 53.33 percent of the respondents have gold assets, 24 percent of the respondents hold chitfunds and 22.67 own land. This would mean that the respondents are aware of the vitality of holding other forms of assets rather than individual bank accounts alone. It is found that only 12.67 percent has profit of above Rs. 10000. The respondents having profit below Rs. 5000 is found to be 53.33 percent. This would indicate that the percent of respondents having a satisfactory profit is less. 62.67 percent of the respondents have opened and maintained bank accounts in their own names. This would indicate the tendency of the respondents to be economically independent. 53.33 percent of the respondents have gold assets, 24 percent of the respondents hold chitfunds and 22.67 own land. This would mean that the respondents are aware of the vitality of holding other forms of assets rather than individual bank accounts alone.

(ii) Type of women enterprises of Kerala.

It is found that 22 percent of the respondents are engaged in tailoring and fashion designing. 21.33 percent of the respondents run beauty clinics, 19.33 percent involved in running kindergartens and tuition centres, 19.33 percent engaging in running DTPcentres and xerox centres, 13.33 percent respondents involved in running bakery and snack parlours and 4 percent running dispensaries and medical stores. It is found that the least percent of the respondents (0.67 percent) run supermarkets and provision stores. This would reflect the lack of the willingness to take risk and the inclination towards building a safer zone within their own family premises. 31.33 percent of the respondents have undertaken their enterprises for stable income. 17 percent of the respondents have undertaken their enterprises for clearing debts. 28 percent of the respondents have undertaken their enterprises on the advise of family and friends and only 17.33 percent have undertaken their enterprises on self interest. 56 percent respondents have depended on bank loans to begin their enterprises. Only 19.33 percent of the respondents borrowed from others. It is found that 24.67 of the respondents used their own money from families to undertake their enterprises. 85.33 respondents work above 7 hours per day towards their business. It is interesting to find that there are none who work less than three hours. This would indicate the capability of the respondents to take up responsibility to work hard for a better living. 68 percent respondents have not received any technical training for running enterprises. Only 32 percent respondents have
undergone technical training. This reflects on the tendency of the women to remain uncompetitive and unskilled in the markets. It is found that there is a positive support towards 88.67 percent of the women entrepreneurs. Only 11.33 percent women entrepreneurs face lack of support from the staff.

(iii) Impact of women entrepreneurship of Kerala

40.67 percent of the respondents opines that they have financial independence after they started running their enterprises. 38 percent respondents experience personal satisfaction, which would mean a greater self esteem. 11.33 percent of the respondents opined that their standard of living has improved. 5.33 percent of the respondents opined that they were able to repay their debt obligations and 4.67 percent respondents opined that they have become more competent and skilled entrepreneurs in the society. This indicates that though financial independence and satisfaction levels are reached, yet women entrepreneurs who become competent and skilled, who have acceptance as entrepreneurs in the society is still under question. This throws light on the necessary steps to be taken at the policy level to improve aforesaid conditions. Almost 85 percent of the respondents opined that they are able to succeed their male counterparts. This indicates the general positive attitude that women possess while entering into any business activity.

(iv) Relationship between monthly profit and constrains faced by women entrepreneurs of Kerala – A comparison of Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut.

The profit of the entrepreneurs of Trivandrum and the constraints faced by the women entrepreneurs of Trivandrum have highly significant. The results of the Post –hoc test with respect to the women entrepreneurs of Trivandrum reveals that most of the P–values are not significant as they are greater than .05. However, the most significant P–values are (0.01, 0.000, 0.000 and 0.000) and these values indicates that Lack of market knowledge is closely associated with inability to take decisions, lack of support from families, lack of communication skill and stress and balancing business and family corresponds lack of market knowledge. The profits of the entrepreneurs of Cochin and the constraints faced by the women entrepreneurs of Cochin have no significant association. The profits of the entrepreneurs of Calicut and the constraints faced by the women entrepreneurs of Calicut have significant association. The results of the Post –hoc test with respect to the women entrepreneurs of Calicut reveals that most of the P–values are not significant as they are greater than .05. However, the most significant P–values are (0.03, 0.001) and these values indicates that Lack of market knowledge, inability to take decisions and stress in balancing business and family are closely associated.
Other key findings

It is found that 48.67% of the families of respondents lend financial support to the respondents. 31.33% of the families of respondents help in managing the enterprise. 18.67% of the families of the respondents provide advice in running the business and only 1.33% of the respondents' families fail to have any role played in running business. This indicates that majority of the families of the respondents provide a helping hand in the respondents' business activities. Almost 83.33% of the respondents are able to balance business and household activities. This would also reflect the sense of responsibility that women showcase for a healthy family life. It is found that 56.67% of the respondents opined that they have support from Government authorities. 43.33% of the respondents opined that they do not have any government support. 59.33% of the entrepreneurs face problems from men. 40.67% of the entrepreneurs opined that they have not come across problems from men. It is found that there is not much percentage. 63.33% of the women entrepreneurs opined that women as entrepreneurs are less accepted than male entrepreneurs. 36.67% of the women entrepreneurs opined that women are accepted like male entrepreneurs. This would indicate the low self esteem that majority of the respondents have, that mentally persuades them from achieving their desired goals. It is found that 45.33% of the problem faced by women entrepreneurs in Kerala from men in society are verbal abusals. Non-co-operation is experienced by 27.33% of the respondents faced theft and malpractices from men and 6.77% of the respondents faced threats from men in society. This would indicate the chauvinist attitude that men play upon women, when they find the tendency of women to be empowered. 68.67% of the respondents opined that they are more risk-taking and responsible in their business. 31.33% of the respondents expressed lack of risk-taking ability and responsibility mainly due to the constraints like lack of sufficient market knowledge. 63.33% of the women entrepreneurs opined that women as entrepreneurs are not accepted like male entrepreneurs. 36.67% of the women entrepreneurs opined that women are accepted like male entrepreneurs. This would indicate the low self esteem that majority of the respondents have on the one hand and the superiority attitude that men has upon women. Thus this mentally persuades women entrepreneurs from achieving their desired goals.
CONCLUSION

The present study ‘A Study on Constraints of Women Entrepreneurship in Kerala’ is a humble effort of the investigator to understand the major constraints faced by women entrepreneurs comprising of those residing in Southern, Central and Northern regions of Kerala. In Kerala, majority of women entrepreneurs are well educated, between the age group 30-40 years, living in nuclear families and who do not have to cater to large number of dependents in their homes. 80 percent of them are married and receive considerable family support in running their business activities. At this juncture, it is crucial to probe into the question as to what reasons prevent women with an average socio-economic status to become underperformers, who are not able to earn a decent amount of profit from their enterprises. These can be pinpointed on several grounds:

Most of the women entrepreneurs do not undergo proper technical training before setting an enterprise. Though they work for long hours, majority of the entrepreneurs are not goal oriented and would be happy to stay as ‘mediocres’ which makes them unskilled and less competent. As a result they fail to attain adequate market knowledge. Another reason is that majority of the women entrepreneurs of Kerala are much devoted to their family on the one hand and responsible towards their business ventures on the other hand. But simultaneously taking care of the two on an equal basis through the life time would result in difficulties such as mental and physical stress. It may be for the same reason that most of the women have built beauty wellness clinics, kindergartens, tailoring centres within their own house premises. This would definitely hinder women entrepreneurs from gaining real market experiences and exposures. Yet another major reason that women entrepreneurs face is the attitude of men in society. Those women running business enterprises away from their house premises face problems with men. 68 percent women have experienced verbal abusals and non-co-operation from male counterparts. Women feel that how much ever they excel they will not be accepted as successful entrepreneurs by the society. This low self esteem that women possess is a consequence of male chauvinism in the typical Kerala society which is played frequently by men when they perceive the tendency of women to excel beyond their expectations.

It is thus suggested that irrespective of the community and caste preferences, the Government should devise a plan of action to locate women with high potential, who could become successful entrepreneurs in the economy, provide them adequate opportunities to expand
their horizons, facilitate exchange programmes with other states and countries to meet and interact with successful entrepreneurs and to motivate them making them feel that they are accepted in society and are creative agents to the nation.