

Socio-Economic challenges faced by women entrepreneurs from the slums of Chennai city

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Abstract

For the developing country like India, one of the major challenges is the alleviation of poverty. Though we have the good and successive initiation and implementation of Five Year Plans in India from the year 1951, the problem of poverty is not still uprooted to a greater extent. But it has been reduced to some extent. One of the best and effective ways of handling, tackling and embarking upon the poverty elimination is through providing sustainable livelihood opportunities to poor. Engaging the women to actively involve in micro enterprises has been a significant approach in this context, because it creates employment opportunities and this paves the way for economic growth. For the last two decades, women have been earning to support their family, besides doing their household chores. A sizable number of married women have taken up entrepreneurial activity, particularly in micro enterprise sectors. Though with willingness and commitment, women take bold steps to come out of their house, they fail to sustain in the journey of entrepreneurship. The key objective of this study is to elicit and enumerate the problems faced by women entrepreneurs, specifically from the slums of Chennai. This study documents both primary and secondary data. Using a non-probability sampling, convenient sampling method was adopted to collect the primary data from 50 women in slums, doing entrepreneurial activities to primarily eke out their livelihood. The study comes out with the conclusion that women in the slums of Chennai operate micro enterprises within the boundaries of their local areas. The pertinent fact here is that age factor does not put any impact on the women entrepreneurs, but then these women are having entrepreneurial problems and also the numerous problems like personal, financial, knowledge, marketing, social and psychological. Most of the women are not aware of various Policies and Programmes of the government to support their entrepreneurship. It is very evident that family income has no association with the problems of the women entrepreneurs in slums. Whether they have less or more family income, the problems encountered by them are manifold which cannot be merely explained in words, but rather NGOs and Government has to come to their doorstep to help them ease their problems and make them to be successful small entrepreneurs in their localities.

Keywords: socio-economic challenges, poverty alleviation, economic opportunity, economic growth, entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs, slums

Introduction

The core of economic development is primarily said to be entrepreneurship. Entrepreneur is the main person, playing a key factor in promoting and doing entrepreneurship. During these days, women are coming out of the four walls of their house, showing keen interest to work and bring economic prosperity to their family through entrepreneurship in their locality with the support of their better half. It clearly shows that women are emerging to shine well in terms of economic force. In the present time, along with household chores, women are taking up equal role as of that of the bread winner of the family in contributing financially. Therefore, one could understand about women that they constitute the family, which leads to societal growth and economic development of their families.

The Context

Entrepreneurship refers to starting and setting a new business which is suitable to the locality of the needs of people after analyzing the new avenues of sales and market possibilities. As everyone agrees that entrepreneur is the key factor of entrepreneurship and many of the women in the slums are successful in this to some extent, as they naturally possess good qualities desirable for entrepreneurship development.

Entrepreneurship is indeed said to be an apt and also suitable profession for the slum dwelling women than regular employment. It is found that women are taking good amount of interest in the Entrepreneurship these days than the bygone years. The women have achieved immense development in their mind. Self Help Groups under Mahalir Thittam scheme have been encouraging the women for taking up entrepreneurship for more than two decades in Tamil Nadu. Women from rural and urban setting are greatly benefitting in this. As a result, women are able to contribute economically to their families to the most desirable extent, which gradually paves the way for economic development and empowerment of women. NGOs are playing active role in this regard to supporting the women socially and financially through various projects and programmes.

With increasing dependency on services sectors, still there are good numbers of opportunities for women to excel in entrepreneurship. The research shows positively that during last two decades, increasing numbers of Indian women, every year, have entered in the field of entrepreneurship and also they change the face of business. With reference to women in the slums in Chennai, they have been taking keen and ardent interest in recent years by doing self-business that brings them constant income to their families. In the process of

Entrepreneurship, in the recent past to till date, we find that women are encountering several problems and these problems, as the days pass by, get doubled because of her dual role as earner in self-business and as homemakers in the family. In the slums of Chennai city, most of the women as homemakers would like to start their own business but there are frequent problems, affect them on their way. As a result, they feel frustrated in dual role. Having understood this, Government started several programmes through NGOs and Slum Clearance Board with the support of Mahalir Thittam fund for training of women entrepreneurship and promoting them to venture into entrepreneurship by distributing loans with lot of subsidy. This is one of the indicators of women development and economic empowerment. Training programmes create the interest among women in many newer ways and ultimately being helpful to increase the skills of women to emerge as women entrepreneurs and also to build the social attitude and instilling high confidence in them in the field of entrepreneurship.

The need and importance

Not only social but also economic development of women is very much indispensable for development of any country. These days, as women are educated considerably to handle their family and even to the extent of tutoring their sons and daughter like a tuition teacher in the evening times. Above all, increasing number of women in slums in the city of Chennai are willing to start their own business but they could not succeed, as they wish and plan, in our Indian environment in way in which it should be. It is mainly due to the factor of fast changing environment in India, now men easily accept them better half for finding out entrepreneurial opportunities in many possible ways and finally helping them to plunge into economic activity, i.e. small entrepreneurial activities within their localities that enable them to fetch every day income with a small investment. In the development sector, more number of NGOs are increasing their services through their social support and financial contribution in promoting women in the slums for taking up entrepreneurship. The main purpose of this study is to study in depth about the various motivating and de-motivating internal and external factors of women entrepreneurship in slums.

Methodology

The study was conducted in two zones in the corporation of Chennai. The researcher applied random technique for the selection of study area. A sample of 60 women respondents, 30 each from each zone, was studied at individual level not in the partnership. Entrepreneurial activities such as selling flowers, selling fish, running petty shops and tiffin centers, saree business and selling cooked beef in the evening were taken for the study. The sample was selected using nonrandom opportunity sampling techniques and case study techniques. Descriptive design was used to explain the following tools.

1. Economic, managerial profile
2. Training needs
3. Management questionnaire
4. Personality question for evaluate the personality of the women entrepreneur

Table 1: Socio-economic and demography profile of women entrepreneurs

Socio-economic and demography profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years		
20-30	7	12
31-40	20	33
41-50	22	37
More than 50	11	18
Education		
Illiterates	9	15
Primary Education (I-V)	20	33
Middle School (VI-VIII)	13	22
High School (IX-X)	11	18
Higher Secondary Education (XI-XII)	5	9
Diploma/Degree	2	3
Married status		
Unmarried	4	7
Married living with husband	30	50
Deserted	8	13
Widow	15	25
Divorce	3	5
Number of Children		
None	5	9
1	11	18
2	16	27
3	22	36
More than 3	6	10
Income per month		
Upto Rs.3000	5	9
Rs.3001 - 4500	17	29
Rs.4501 - 6000	19	31
Rs.6001 - 7500	10	16
More than 7500	9	15

Analysis

It is obvious that most of the women entrepreneurs (37%) belong to the age group of 41-50 and followed by the age group of 31-40, which constitute 33% and more than 50 years are (18%) in that order. Hirsch and brush (1986) described the typical women entrepreneurs start doing entrepreneurship to be about 35 years of age. This is almost true here. This age group clearly explains that they start their business due to the economic pressure that demands them to be active in this. Also it is very evident that their children are grown up and therefore they have leisure time. This allows them to concentrate in their business on demand of their family and economical needs. A sizable number of women entrepreneurs come about 12% and they belong to the low income level that is upto Rs.3000 and only 15% women are earning above Rs.7500.

The data aptly reflects that among the other needs, economic needs are the primary and very essential factor for the women to enter into entrepreneurship. On the other hand, women with small families of just one child (18%) enter into this type of entrepreneurship. Educational status does not influence women in seeking this type of entrepreneurship (Rani, 1992). Majority in this was 33% of the women who have just completed Primary education (I-V grades). As this study is done in slums, the data reveals that only 15% women were illiterates which are a least % when compared to the total % of women entrepreneurs. The second majority of the women (22%) completed their Middle school education (VI-VIII grades) and 18% studied high school (IX-X grades). The data

shows that only 3% women have completed either diploma or degree and this very fact reflects that higher education does not affect the interest of women in this field.

The data shows that married women who have been living with their husband are having more interest in the women entrepreneurship. Exactly half of the respondents (50%) are involved in the business because they need more financial support than unmarried and other categories of women who were studied. Only 7% women interviewed are unmarried. The second highest majority of the women are widows, doing their business. This shows that married women take more risk in starting a business that supports their family.

Among the married women who were interviewed in this study only 9% have no children. 18% women have only one child. Most of the women (36%) have three children. More than half of the respondents (27%) have two children. This data shows the maximum interest shown successfully running entrepreneurship are the women who are married, having two children and three children respectively constitute 27% and 36%.

Table 2: Investments Invested by Women

Investment	Frequency	Percentage
Rs. 5000-10000	26	43
Rs. 10001-15000	21	35
More than 15001	13	22
Total	60	100

It is inferred from table – 2 that about half of the respondents (43%) of the women entrepreneurs have invested between Rs.5000 – 10000. The next majority are one of third of women respondents (35%) have invested between Rs.10001 – 15000. About quarter of the respondents (22%) have invested more than Rs.15001 in the business.

About half of the women are aware about the support system of the govt. from banks through Self Help Groups, but the remaining are not aware about the loan system. Only few % of women are taking support directly from the financial institution for an interest more than the bank interest. About quarter of the respondents are availing financial support from their relatives, known persons, parents, and finally from the money lenders due to the delay from the banks and long procedures. About one third of the respondents (33%) have expressed that they do not know the bank procedure and it is very long process.

Table 3: No. of Hours Devoted for their Business Women entrepreneurship also affects the no. of hours devoted in the business.

No. of hours	Frequency	Percentage
2 - 4 hrs	10	17
5 - 7 hrs	32	53
8 - 10 hrs	15	25
More than 10 hours	3	5
Total	60	100

In the study of data we find that more than half of the women (53%) are working for 5-7 hrs and the rest of the time, they have their house work and burden of the family work and this reflects that they have huge family support and husband support. Exactly quarter of the respondents (25%) have only

8-10 hrs for their business. Only 17% women gave 2-4 hrs to their business. In the study, we find that there are only 5% women who are totally devoted to their business and this data shows that they are either deserted by their husband or have become widows.

Suggestions

There are some suggestions for promotion of the women entrepreneurship to keep in mind through the present study. Proper training in right direction is to be planned meticulously. Proper planning and execution are required at all levels. Furthermore, the steps to be taken are listed as follows:

1. Gender specific training is must to the women entrepreneurs to suit socio-economic and demographic condition.
2. Public speaking scheme also provided by the govt. to the women entrepreneurs.
3. In networking with leading institutions, pre-entrepreneurial training to the women entrepreneur is the need of the hour and it should be done.
4. The government of Tamil Nadu through Mahalir Thittam has to identify women who are having literacy skills and unlettered status. Based on this, they have to organize or form different groups in proper functioning manner and create awareness about entrepreneurship and its importance as job providing avenues rather than job seeking ventures
5. The next immediate step is to identify what kind of skills to be provided to the selected women who are already having hands on experience. Once the specific groups are identified, then it is a must to concentrate on the following areas
 - a. making them realize the income generation and social status and recognition
 - b. giving orientation and skill training on selected trades, of their choice and suitability
 - c. By providing consultancy and guidance continuously, NGOs could closely assist them in preparation of project reports for their own proposed units and helping them to follow up the venture to start the new enterprise
 - d. Government of Tamil Nadu can also entrust the responsibility to some of the B+ schools or expert institutions, voluntary agencies or specific Government departments to provide a training capsule of around 15 days.
 - e. The financial resources are to be mobilized to provide this type of programs, by the government organizations like banks, public sector organizations and voluntary agencies.
 - f. The higher education institutions, which are spreading throughout the country, may conduct programs like this, regularly, in addition to their academic programs, with or without government aid.
 - g. In the name of Internship, the final year students of U.G/P.G courses may also be provided with such training. Normally, infrastructures are available with such institutions. Getting expertise and mobilizing other requirements will also be easier for such institutions, since they are already having good establishment facilities.

Conclusion

Women entrepreneurs faced so many problems in aspects of financial, marketing, health, family, and location. Some guidelines should be given by the govt. and the financial institution to the women entrepreneur at time to time. They also need a training of managerial and technical skills. What women need for enterprises little training, some financial support and motivation at all levels-home, the society and the government. It is hoped that suggestion provided in the article will help the entrepreneurs in particular to look into their problems and issues of their entrepreneurial activities and develop better schemes by the govt.

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