



Empowerment of rural women through entrepreneurship in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh (With a special reference to scheduled caste women)

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Abstract

In India, women constitute nearly 48% of the population but their participation in quantifiable economic activity is around 25.7%. The effect of this economic inequality is mirrored in the social scenario, where a small percentage of population is becoming more and more prosperous and nearly two-thirds by the population still remains poor and untouched of technological progress. The present paper is focused on socio-economic status of the women entrepreneurs among Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh state. Women involvement in economic activities is marked by low work participation rates, excessive concentration in the unorganized sector of the economy and in low skill jobs. There is a greater dynamism in the rate of growth of female employment. However, in rural areas, agriculture has provided more employment for women. The gaps identified in the earlier studies depicts that Specific studies are not made to identify the problems of Women entrepreneurs in rural and tribal areas, there are little efforts to examine the level of Women empowerment through-entrepreneurship- in small / micro enterprises in rural areas, Role of Socio-economic and demographic factors in determining the status of Women entrepreneurs, Role of stress and living conditions of Women entrepreneurs before and after starting the micro enterprise in rural economy.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, empowerment, MSMEs, rural economy

Introduction

The dynamic nature of small business calls for innovative approaches to entrepreneurship education and training and improved management techniques. Dissemination of innovative approaches and new knowledge developed is also extremely important in furthering the cause of entrepreneurship.

In India, women constitute nearly 48% of the population but their participation in quantifiable economic activity is around 25.7%. The effect of this economic inequality is mirrored in the social scenario, where a small percentage of population is becoming more and more prosperous and nearly two-thirds by the population still remains poor and untouched of technological progress ^[1].

Most women in India as well as other developing countries are increasingly being compelled to take up low skill, low paid, monotonous jobs because of economic hardships. Identifying and developing women entrepreneurship will not only result in economic benefits of growth, job creation and wealth distribution but also societal benefits of increased independence for women as well as job enrichment and satisfaction. A natural corollary of this would be their increased strength to fight violence, discrimination and oppression ^[2].

Evolution and growth of Women Entrepreneurship

The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1991 has highlighted the necessity to provide special training programmes to develop woman entrepreneurship. The Resolution further adds that the objective of the course is to increase the representation of women in the field of small industry development and to enhance their economic and special status ^[3].

Women entrepreneurship in India

Entrepreneurship is not new to Indian Women. A number of them have been engaged in home –grown vegetables, milk vending, butter and ghee making by maintaining one or a few milch animals. Women are also engaged in goat rearing, poultry farming, money lending, selling textiles in the neighborhood etc. The money generated through such home –based entrepreneurship helps in augmenting family income in a modest way ^[4]. But the entry of women in organized business is a fairly recent phenomenon.

Empowerment through Entrepreneurship

Empowerment and entrepreneurship complement each other. While successful entrepreneurship can lead to empowerment, empowerment enables the entrepreneur to be motivated enough to accomplish the set foals. Rural women need support, counseling and training to become empowered. Empowerment enables an entrepreneur to think independently and make her own perception and judgment ^[5].

Need for the study

Women involvement in economic activities is marked by low work participation rates, excessive concentration in the unorganized sector of the economy and in low skill jobs. There is a greater dynamism in the rate of growth of female employment among the SCs. However, in rural areas, agriculture has provided more employment for SCs women. The gaps identified in the earlier studies depicts that Specific studies are not made to identify the problems of women entrepreneurs among the SCs in rural areas of Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh, there are little efforts

to examine the level of women empowerment through-entrepreneurship- in small / micro enterprises in rural areas, role of socio-economic and demographic factors in determining the status of SCs women entrepreneurs, role of stress and living conditions of women entrepreneurs before and after starting the micro enterprise in rural economy.

Review of literature

Subramanyam and Reddy (2012) presented an overview of micro, small and medium enterprise in India. It made a comparison of the growth of entrepreneurial aspects with overall industrial sector and found that the entrepreneurial activities has contributed significantly to India’s Gross Domestic Product and exports earnings [6].

Parveen (2014) found that workshops organized by different NGO’s helped rural women to provide financial support, entrepreneurial education and mentorship. The study revealed that trained rural women entrepreneur have better business skills and abilities [7].

Objectives

The following are the objectives set for the present study:

1. To study the concept and the traits of women entrepreneurship in India and Andhra Pradesh.
2. To examine the socio-economic status of the women entrepreneurs among Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.
3. To analyse and ascertain the entrepreneurial avenues and performance aspects of women entrepreneurs among SCs in the selected areas.
4. To suggest measures in order to promote the empowerment of women entrepreneurs among SCs in rural areas.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of the present study based on Stratified random sampling technique was applied. The study has been confined to **two** mandals of Prakasam District because the highest Scheduled Caste (SCs) population. In choosing the areas and selecting the entrepreneurs, the researcher has followed the data pertaining to mandal/village –wise number of small units (both production and trading) located in the district furnished by the office of the Director, Velugu Project, Prakasam district.

Two mandals – the area is based on the criteria of the highest number of units by women entrepreneurs among the SCs in the selected mandals. The mandals selected for the study are: Pamuru (141) and Triuranthakam (142) area of

Praksam District. In the next stage 6 villages (3 villages from each mandal) have been selected from the sample mandals by considering the number of units functioning.

The number of respondents selected from all these two mandals sample villages is 283. Out of the total sample, 141 respondents were chosen and the remaining 142 have been chosen.

Data and Results

Status depends on employment and income earning levels among Scheduled Caste women in the study area. As entrepreneurs, the respondent women are preoccupied with economic activities which bring them incomes. So incomes and employment are bound to enhance the economic status of the respondents. Empowerment of the women and entrepreneurship of the SC’s women are complementarities. Empowerment enables the entrepreneurs to be motivated to accomplish the set goals. It also enables the women to think independently and make their own perceptions and judgments.

Table 1: Nature of the unit

S. No.	Value	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Production Unit	160	56.54
2	Service & Trade	123	43.46
	Total	283	100.00

Source: Compiled from collected data.

Out of 283 units, 56.54 per cent belong to production units, and rest of the units (43.46 per cent) is engaged in service and trade activities.

Table 2: Nature of the production units

S. No.	Production	No. of Units	Percentage
1	Milk	154	54.42
2	Others	6	2.12
3	Non – Production Units	123	43.46
	Total	283	100.00

Source: Compiled from collected data.

Table–2 shows that 54.42 per cent (154) of sample product units are milk production. It is apparent that milk production is the main activity. In study area only 6 units (2.12 per cent) are in the production of pickles. Leaf plate making etc., However, they too, ignite the hope that rural area have the potentiality to develop in other lines of production. Cost of maintenance or cost of production of milk in these villages is comparatively low as input costs are low.

Table 3: Interdependence of women entrepreneur and families

			Income of family	
			Less than 5000	Greater than 5000
Status of women	Women depend on family	Count	95	219
		Expected count	140.7	173.3
	Family depend on women	Count	129	57
		Expected count	83.3	102.7
	Total	Count	224	276
		Expected Count	224.0	276.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	72.212 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity correction	70.640	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	73.522	1	.000		

Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear by Linear Association	72.068	1	.000		
N of valid Cases	283				

- a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 83.33
- b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

It was assumed that the financial conditions of family does not play significant role for involvement of women in entrepreneurship and the dependency of the women on the family does not depend on the income level of family. The data as per the above table and the discussions project that X² calculated 722.212 was much greater than the tabulated value of 3.143 at 0.05 level of significance.

Status of the women entrepreneurs

To know the improvement in the status of the respondent women both in family and society, after starting the

enterprises opinions are collected and depicted in table –4. 64.3 per cent (182) of the respondents state that there is some change of progressive nature in their status both in family and society. 33.9 per cent (96) of them state that their status has improved and a recognized change has occurred. Together, 98 per cent respondents openly state that their status after starting the units has improved in the family and also in the society. Generally entrepreneurial activity brings income and develops individually.

Table 4: Status of the women entrepreneurs after starting the unit

S. No.	Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	No Change	5	1.77
2	Some Change	182	64.31
3	Recognized Change Occurred	96	33.92
	Total	283	100.00

Source: Compiled from collected data.

Entrepreneurship has improved the financial status of the respondents. They are quite smooth and effective in their social status. They are habituated to maintain available relationships with some customers and the general public. Confident levels of the respondents are also high after starting the units. All these factors have a cumulative effect on the regard and recognition of the role of the respondents in the family and also by the husband. They treat the respondents in a better manner with all respect, love and affection after starting the units. It is natural that the entrepreneurial activities will definitely elevate their image in the family also.

Absolute quantities of consumption per month have increased with regard to all commodities. Consumption of milk has increased by 8 litres, vegetables by 4 Kgs., fruits by 1 dozen, Oil by 1 Kg., pulses 0.8 Kg., Non-veg items by 0.8 Kgs and eggs in 8 numbers. Most of the items add to the value of nutrition and health of the family members. When incomes increase higher standards of living are reflected in the form of increased levels of consumption. The expenditure on clothing has also increased by Rs. 103/- per month. Clothes are also basic necessities and the increase in the expenditure points out the increase in the standard of living.

Table 5: Family consumption patterns (before and after starting the unit)

S. No.	Item	Previous consumption (per month)	Previous average (per months)	Present consumption (monthly)	Present average	Difference in average consumption
1	Milk (Lts)	3928/279	14	6330/283	22	8
2	Vegetables (Kgs)	3782/283	13	4878/283	17	4
3	Fruits (Dozens)	1802/159	11	3205/265	12	1
4	Oil (kgs)	720/283	2.5	966/283	3.5	1
5	Pulses (Kgs)	637/283	2.2	876/283	3.0	0.8
6	Non – Veg (Kgs)	492/267	1.8	705/271	2.6	0.8
7	Eggs (Dozens)	7429/244	30	9771/253	38	8
8	Clothing (Rs.)	99900/283	353	129200/283	456	103

Source: Compiled from collected data.

Data in the above table–6 shows the changes as stated by the respondents in the area of study. About 98.58 per cent (279) respondents state that there is an improvement in personal health and cleanliness. 82.69 per cent (234) respondents state that they meet the government officials without any inhibitions, 77.03 per cent (218) of them meet the non government organizations and officials without any hiccups. 86.93 per cent (246) respondents opined that their banking habits have improved. The Regression Coefficient between the selected independent variables and empowerment presented in table-

7 indicates that the value of coefficient of multiple determinations (R²) with 10 independent variable is 0.122. The value of F- ratio is 3.4 and it is significant at 1% level of significance. It was also revealed through the values of regression coefficients (b) that the variables namely family type, asset holding, socio-political participation, socio-economic status and autonomy were highly significant at 1% level of significance and family size, self esteem, reflective behaviour, entrepreneurial behaviour and decision making power were significant at 5% level of significance.

Table 6: Change in empowerment in various aspects – opinion of the respondents

S. No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents		Total
		YES	NO	
1	Improvement in personal health and cleanliness	279 (98.58)	4 (1.42)	283 (100.00)
2	Ability to meet the Govt.Officials	234 (82.69)	46 (16.25)	
3	Ability to meet Non –Govt.Officials	218 (77.03)	65 (22.97)	
4	Improvement in Banking habits	246 (86.93)	37 (13.07)	
5	High level of confidence of the lenders on repayment	273 (96.46)	10 (3.53)	
6	Improvement in the position and status in the family	226 (79.86)	57 (20.14)	
7	Betterment of status in the group	224 (79.15)	59 (20.85)	
8	Discernible improvement in the social status	217 (76.68)	66 (23.32)	
9	Increasing role in decision making in the family matters	198 (69.96)	85 (30.04)	
10	Assertive role in decision making in the group	175 (61.84)	108 (38.16)	
11	Higher levels of self confidence	235 (83.04)	48 (16.96)	
12	Improvement in your overall skills	176 (62.19)	107 (37.81)	

Source: Compiled from collected data.

Table 7: Factors effecting empowerment of the respondents

S. No	Independent Variables	Regression Coefficient(*b)	SE of 'b'	't' value	Result
1	Family Type	2.064	0.854	2.597**	Highly significant
2	Family Size	1.136	0.587	1.973*	Significant
3	Asset Holding	1.404	0.691	2.634**	Highly Significant
4	Socio-political participation	1.988	0.878	2.582**	Highly Significant
5	Socio-economic status	-1.185	0.477	2.588**	Highly Significant
6	Autonomy	1.164	0.477	2.584**	Highly Significant
7	Self-Esteem	0.136	0.110	1.986*	Significant
8	Reflective behaviour	-0.212	0.192	1.964*	Significant
9	Entrepreneurial behaviour	-0.286	0.155	1.984*	Significant
10	Decision making power	-5.533	0.004	1.962*	Significant
	R ²	0.122			
	F- value	3.400**			
	d.f.	09			

* Significant at 5% level of significance ** Significant at 1% level of significance.

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis of Independent variables with Dependent variable – Empowerment of Women (n= 283)

- Hence, it can be inferred from these results that these independent variables are important determinants of the empowerment of women.

Findings

- The present study has been observed that 63 percent of the sample women entrepreneurs are in the age group of 21-39 years. It implies that most of the respondents are in the working age with all vigor and vitality. Age in the study area is in favour of hard work, dedication, commitment, courage, innovation, creativity and risk taking.
- Entrepreneurial activities in the study are very different in nature. About 49 percent of the women entrepreneurs are engaged in production and trade, followed by 33 percent who are exclusively in trade, 8 percent are in service activities, 6 percent are in the production and service activities and only 3 percent are in production, trade and service. This implies that a majority of women entrepreneurs have chosen the activities pertaining to production and trade.
- It is also found that a majority of women entrepreneurs (55 percent) are engaged in mini dairy, followed by business (26 percent) such as general stores, fancy, running cut piece centers, tailoring (9 percent), managing hotel (3 percent) and vegetable vending (2 percent) etc., Availability of fodder, vast vacant lands and green pastures prompt the respondents to take up milk production. There are variations in the quantities of milk produced by the respondents. Most of the units

produce below 150 liters per month. It implies that 95 percent of the enterprises in the milk production are small.

- Agriculture is the main occupation in the study area. More than 50 percent of the respondents depend on agriculture directly or indirectly, working as cultivators and farmhands. Some of the husbands of the respondents help them in child care when wives are preoccupied with the entrepreneurial activities. This is, again, a progressive trend in lending a helping hand to the wives.
- A small attempt to quantify the performance of entrepreneurship is also made in the form of Indicator Entrepreneurial Effectivity (IEE). The IEE is calculated to the 88.5 and it indicates the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in the light of the facilitating factors.
- Most of the women entrepreneurs (98.2 percent) in the study area state that their status both in the family and society has improved after starting the entrepreneurial activities. They feel that husbands and their family members treat them better with all love, affection and respect. Majority of the respondent women (80 percent) state that they have control over their earnings.

Suggestions

- Illiteracy still persists among the respondents and their spouses. Adult education centre involving NGOs, NSS, and other voluntary organizations should organize programmes on literacy in a massive way.

- Entrepreneurial activity has shifted good number of agricultural labour from wage work and also created incomes to the house wives. Entrepreneurship has provided higher incomes and also brought occupational shift in the study area.
- A majority of women felt that their status in the family and society has improved after entering into the entrepreneurial activities and they have control over their incomes. Consumption levels have increased. More freedom is being enjoyed after starting the units. They are getting involved in decision making at the house also. Empowerment of the women has an economic dimension in the form of income earning. So the basic requisite for the empowerment of the women is income generation which depends on education, skills, and encouragement.

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