

Factors Determining Role of Women Entrepreneurship in Women Empowerment: A Qualitative Study using Thematic Analysis

Dr. Arun Mittal

Assistant Professor, Department of Management

Project Director (ICSSR Major Project*)

Birla Institute of Technology (Deemed University), Mesra, Ranchi (Jharkhand)

Mobile No. 9873957205, Email: arunmittal@bitmesra.ac.in

Prof. (Dr.) Shankar Lal Gupta

Professor, Department of Management

Co-Project Director (ICSSR Major Project*)

Birla Institute of Technology (Deemed University), Mesra, Ranchi (Jharkhand)

Mobile No. 9811230453, Email: drslgupta@bitmesra.ac.in

Project Title: "Role of Women Entrepreneurship in Holistic Empowerment of Women: An Empirical Study of Semi-Urban and Urban Women Entrepreneurs".

Acknowledgement: "The scholars Dr. Arun Mittal and Prof. (Dr.) Shankar Lal Gupta are the awardee of ICSSR Research Major Research Project. This research paper is largely an outcome of the Research Project sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). However, the responsibility for the facts stated opinions expressed, and the conclusions drawn is entirely that of the author."

Abstract

Women empowerment is one of the most important aspects the society is focusing upon. Education and Financial well being of women have been the buzz words; however, a large number of studies show that, for women, there is a long way to achieve actual and real empowerment. Empowerment does not lie in the money a woman earns or the worldly possessions she has. Whether married or unmarried, a woman has always been a victim of social, financial, psychological, physical, and political restricts. Empowerment means freedom of women in all the areas mentioned above. This paper exploratory cum descriptive in nature in which a survey of 78 women entrepreneurs was carried out. The data collection tool was a structured interview schedule. With respect to the work life balance, income and financial condition, women entrepreneurs reflected the mixed responses, however, with respect to the freedom of choices under the various parameters of empowerment, the response were towards negative side.

Keywords: *Women Entrepreneurship, Women Empowerment, Financial Well Being, Qualitative Research, Thematic Analysis.*

1. Introduction:

Entrepreneurship focuses on innovation, and therefore, entrepreneurs implement an array of strategies ranging from enhancing their competitive advantage, driving the growth, employment, and wealth creation (Appelstrand and Lidestav, 2015). The extant literature has enough evidence where women empowerment has been determined as an outcome of the financial wellbeing of women, through the same has been achieved through various means such as entrepreneurship (Hoque, 2020), microfinance, financial inclusion (Khan, et al., 2020, Lal, 2020) and self-help groups (Kapoor, 2019). The enterprising nature and the essence of entrepreneurship is present in all human beings regardless of the gender. Therefore, the economic growth of the country would be unbalanced if they would exclude the participation of women in entrepreneurial activities (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017). With increasing realization of self-worth and capabilities, women haven taken part in entrepreneurial activities to create employment opportunities for self and others. Women are being empowered as entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs are contributing more to the social development activities (Sajjad, 2020). Therefore, through this study, a holistic framework is proposed to be developed that can ascertain the degree of empowerment which has happened due to women entrepreneurship.

The most important aspect in this study is that it clearly distinguishes between the terms ‘entrepreneurial outcomes’ and ‘women empowerment through entrepreneurship’. The earlier term means that women have better financial condition, better work life balance, flexibility, more respect in the family and more financially sound (Lenka and Agarwal, 2016; Ziyae, et al., 2021). However, the later term is about the freedom of choice and autonomy for her personal, family, social, political, and economic decisions. This difference has been noticed in many existing studies carried out by the scholars (Roy et al., 2021; Bharti, 2021; Khan et al., 2020 and Shuja et al, 2020).

2. Literature Review:

Entrepreneurship leads to the economic, leadership and social empowerment of women (Hoque, et al., 2020). Entrepreneurship is the driver of growth of the economy and a catalyst for the social change. Entrepreneurship gives opportunities to all the segments of the society to contribute to the individual and collective prosperity. Women empowerment in relations with women entrepreneurship has been explained as freedom and autonomy of

women for making decisions in her venture. (Sell and Minot, 2018). However, the concept of women's empowerment is not merely confined to women's development, welfare, or upliftment related to her enterprise. It represents facilitating processes which can enable social change and gender equality – on individuals, relationships, and groups. There has been lot of focus on studying how women entrepreneurship can lead to women empowerment, however, there has been no substantial work done to evaluate and measure the degree of empowerment that has been achieved. This creates a big opportunity for the researchers and academicians and through this project we aim to address this research gap. The major focus of this research project is to measure the personal, social, psychological, political, and economic empowerment of the women through entrepreneurship. Women become economically competent by the utilization of their own knowledge, skills, and abilities (Verheul & Thurik 2001). Women withstand various financial, personal, and social risks to enter the field of entrepreneurship. Even though, the entrepreneurship is commonly found to empower women from harsh and cruel system in both formal and informal institutional space, the extent and range of the attained empowerment remains underexplored.

There have been numerous studies around the world on entrepreneurship and women empowerment. In a recent study by Vukovic, et al. (2021) found that self-employment of women is the major motivation behind the empowerment of women. Solesvik (2018) found that women often become entrepreneurs to fulfill their social needs as compared to men. Women may not head the entire organization initially, rather they may start with information entrepreneurship which gives them some empowerment in the form of confidence and exploring life inspirations. It gradually leads to formal entrepreneurship and more empowerment. However, this is more prevalent in case of young and educated women (Thapa Karki and Xheneti, 2018). In addition, entrepreneurship is helping women to liberate themselves from 'poverty' and enables them to give power to themselves (Scott et al., 2012).

According to Al-Dajani (2013) entrepreneurship is a socio-political activity which helps in women empowerment as the ventures created by women provide a platform to the women to showcase their talent, express themselves, and help in identifying their political power. Thereby, 'Women Empowerment' is a non-stop series that entails improved capabilities

and controls the 'choices, decisions, and actions' to interact with each other and affect the social changes (Jabre et al., 1997).

Women's entrepreneurship offers a wide variety of benefits. In addition to the financial benefits in the form of income, it provides women the equality with men. Women get support from their family members, the attitude of society changes for them, and they get better treatment in all respects be it social, economic, legal or government (Debnath, et al., 2020). Women empowerment is categorized mainly as social, economic, and political empowerment of women which includes their participation in the society, communication, and networking (Chatterjee, 2018). India represents a traditional patriarchal society and women have faced economic and social discrimination for a long time. However, with increasing realization of self-worth and capabilities, women haven taken part in entrepreneurial activities to create employment opportunities for self and others in all prominent sectors (Kashyap, 2017). In one such study by Agarwal & Lenka (2017), it was emphasized that in spite of implementation of various entrepreneurial schemes so as to motivate the women entrepreneurs, a gap is still found between women's active participation in entrepreneurial activities and drawing advantages out of these schemes. Therefore, it is important to spread awareness among women about entrepreneurship and encourage them for entrepreneurial education. There is a requirement of developing a holistic framework that can provide directions to academicians and policy makers to give stress on encouraging women entrepreneurs by developing their capabilities. Several factors like increase in opportunities in the field of education, increased awareness, increased government support through various policies and programs etc., have made significant contributions to the changing landscape for the Indian women entrepreneurs (Radadiya, 2012).

Also, at this point it is important to highlight the role of entrepreneurship as a social catalyst for women empowerment. Entrepreneurship leads to social change and social entrepreneurship ensures the women's empowerment in terms of collective ownership, self-reliance, cooperation, and profit sharing. Further, the women perceives that the major factors defining their empowerment are their financial security, development of behavior as entrepreneur and better contribution towards their family (Datta & Gailey, 2012). While most of the other authors have focused on the financial aspect of the empowerment, these two multi-dimensional models mainly focused on the social aspect of empowerment. In

addition, there have been several studies which have analysed various government schemes implemented by central and various state governments for the upliftment of women.

3. Research Gaps:

There have been a lot of studies in this area of women entrepreneurship and empowerment which have revealed that how women empower, what are their entrepreneurial motivations and what are the rewards they get from entrepreneurship. However, the stories keep on revolving around the mentioned jargons only and there is hardly any study which explores how entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial outcomes such as economic achievements, better financial condition, work life balance contributes to the empowerment of women – psychologically, politically, personally, socially, and economically.

4. Objectives of the Study:

- To explore changes in the life of women entrepreneurs as an impact of their entrepreneurship / venture
- To find the extent to which women entrepreneurs feel social, financial, psychological, physical, and political restricts.

5. Research Methodology:

This study is exploratory cum descriptive in nature. The data were collected in the qualitative form from 78 women entrepreneurs from ‘Urban’ and ‘Semi-Urban’ areas (36 from each). Typically, a sample size of 25-30 is considered adequate in the qualitative studies (Dworkin, 2012). Morse (1994) has suggested a sample size of minimum 6 respondents. The data collection instrument was structured interview in which data were recorded in the qualitative (text) form. Hybrid method (In-person and Telephonic Interview) were adopted, through which 47 interviews were taken telephonically and 29 interviews were conducted face-to-face. The data were analyzed in 3 phases. In the first phase, the excerpts of the responses were reviewed carefully, key phrases were identified and reported. In the second phase, themes were generated from the key phrases and lastly, summary of the qualitative analysis was presented. The process followed for analysis has been provided in the Figure 1:

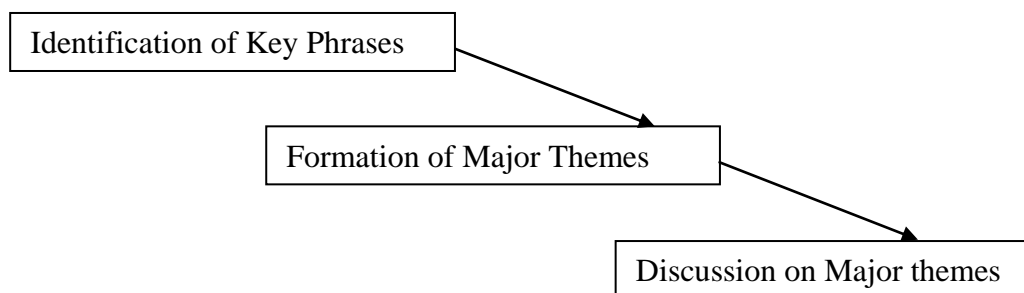


Figure 1 Process of Data Analysis

6. Data Analysis and Interpretations:

6.1 Demographic Profile:

Table 1 There were 69.23% women entrepreneurs between the age group of 36-50 followed by 19.23% from the age group of below 30 and least from the age group of above 50 (19.23%). Most preferred Occupation category is Service (43.31%) followed by Trading with 28.21% and mixed by 16.67%. There were only 12.82% women entrepreneurs who were engaged in manufacturing.

Table 1 Demographic Profile

Demographic Factor	Categories	Number	% age
Age	Below 30	15	19.23
	36 to 50	54	69.23
	Above 50	9	11.54
	Total	78	100.00
Occupation Category	Service	33	42.31
	Trading	22	28.21
	Manufacturing	10	12.82
	Mixed	13	16.67
	Total	78	100.00
Marital Status	Married	51	65.38
	Unmarried / Single	27	34.62
	Total	78	100.00
Stake in Business	100%	65	83.33
	51% or More	13	16.67
	Total	78	100.00

65.38% of the women entrepreneurs included in this study were married and 34.62% were unmarried / single (this also includes the category of divorcee/ widow).

6.2 Key Phrases and Thematic Analysis:

The major portion of the analysis of this study is based on the three broad themes, which were generated from the responses of the women entrepreneurs. This section discusses various themes along with the key phrases.

Theme 1: Routine Work with Aspirations (19 women entrepreneurs):

A small portion of the women entrepreneurs was found who took entrepreneurship as a routine work and had neither big aspirations nor clear-cut goals for their life through their ventures. Their ventures were either a kind of duty given to them by their husband, or a family business which was earlier run by their parents or parent-in-laws. However, most of them were happy doing it. Some of the excerpts and key phrases from such women entrepreneurs are as below:

(Note: The data were in Hindi and English both, it has been translated in English for the analysis purpose).

“...husband takes the decisions; I take care of the customers.”

“My husband motivated me to do this, he is a big support, he takes care of the technical parts, I am interior designer, so I am utilizing my talent in this service.”

“Dealing with vendors is done by husband.”

“My father was running this business, now he is not well, I am doing it till I get married...”

“I Actually do not know how much profit I earn...”

“It is good to do this business, at least it is a good time-pass, till kids are in school.”

“I do not feel I am competent enough to take business decisions alone, as they involve financial nitty-gritty”.

Theme 2: Happy and Enthusiastic (44 women entrepreneurs):

Majority of women were categorized under this theme. Mainly these women were having aspiration to go ahead in life, enjoy financial well-being, have more importance in the family and respect in the society. Some of the excerpts and key phrases from such women entrepreneurs are as below:

“I want to prove myself; I am educated and good decision maker...”

“Work accomplishment gives me happiness, I keep on adding new designs in my collection.”

“My profession gives me a satisfaction, respect and I feel more confident while I talk to my friends, relatives, family members and even kids”.

“.. It is tough to do a business, but it makes me feel proud, the money I earn makes me more financially independent, I need to convince my husband for my expenses.”

“My parents are happy that I am earning, I can fulfill my needs with my own earnings”

Theme 3: Empowered Women (15 women entrepreneurs):

The third theme belongs to the empowered women. This category was found independent, however, not in all the aspects. Some of them were socially empowered, a few of them were financially or economically. However, many of them were physically and psychologically empowered. Some of the excerpts and key phrases from such women entrepreneurs are as below:

“I have full control over my business... I deal with each and everything. vendors, customers, profit, loss everything on my own”

“My family has always encouraged me to take decisions, I am independent, I decide myself about whom to meet, what to do what not to do. Of course I need to respect the boundaries that a woman should respect”

“Entrepreneurship has given me an identity, I am psychologically transformed, I travel alone, I decide about my social circle..”

“I am free to spend whatever I earn...though I discuss it with my husband before I take a final decision”

Summary and Conclusion:

The study indicates that the response of women entrepreneurs towards their empowerment and freedom is multifaceted. The variability may depend upon the circumstances, family background and education also. However, it may be summarized and concluded that women has got happiness and freedom but it will take more time for her be empowered in all respects. Women empowerment in relations with women entrepreneurship has been explained as freedom and autonomy of women for making decisions in her venture. It includes the decision-making power of women about use of funds and profits in the business along with taking the decisions about production etc (Sell and Minot, 2018).It has

been rightly mentioned that “the concept of women’s empowerment goes beyond women’s development, welfare, or upliftment, to represent a process of conscientization and organized struggle for social change and gender equality – on individuals, relationships, and groups”.

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