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Challenges faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs frequently face challenges and problems while starting and developing their businesses. The objective of the study was to examine the problems and challenges women face in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu. For the sample of the study, the researcher identified fifty-five women who were involved in various enterprises. The main obstacles were found to be lack of work- life balance and lack of financial support.

Keywords: Women; Problem; Entrepreneurship; Coimbatore

INTRODUCTION

Though only a small percentage of women in India's formal economy engage in entrepreneurship, more and more Indian women have joined the industry in the past two decades. These business people are making strides in a wide range of fields. The barriers to their achievement have been reduced but not eliminated (Goyal and Prakash 2011).

Entrepreneurship increases the financial independence, self-respect, and confidence of women. According to the 2011 census, the female population was around 48.52 percent, but yet men dominate most business, trade, and industry. Indian women are so strong that they can compete in any economic activity and make their entrepreneurs successful by exploiting their full potential (Asha, 2016).

In the current scenario, the economic growth of the country is basically dependent on the rural development of the country and women's participation in the same. Since a country like India has a male-dominated society where most of the women population living in rural areas are not able to start up, entrepreneurial skills are needed to achieve social and economic empowerment. Rural entrepreneurship, especially in the case of women's participation, is a recent concern in rural India, which helps women achieve economic independence and take on tougher jobs to show their skills and talent. In India, around eight million women entrepreneurs exist, with Tamil Nadu having the highest ratio among them.

Among the states, the largest share of establishments under women's entrepreneurship is in Tamil Nadu (13.51%), followed by Kerala

(11.35%), Andhra Pradesh (10.56%), West Bengal (10.33%), and Maharashtra (8.25%). The average employment per establishment for women owned establishments is 1.67 (Malyadri, 2014).

There are several socio-economic hurdles faced by women while they attempt to venture into setting up and running their enterprises. Hence, the research study discusses the status of women entrepreneurs and their enterprises. Also, an attempt is made to identify the challenges faced by these women entrepreneurs. The major objective of the study was to investigate the problems and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in their enterprise.

METHODOLOGY

For the sample for the research study, the researcher identified and selected fifty-five (55) women entrepreneurs who were involved in various enterprises. Purposive sampling method was used, and it was decided to interact with women entrepreneurs in the Periyanaikenpalayam block of Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, India. Personal interviews of all the selected entrepreneurs were conducted.

The workforce was also interviewed to understand the basic business operations and the hurdle faced by them in their day-to-day operations by the structured interview schedule which was prepared for the study. To understand the correlation among the different variables, correlation analysis has been used. Based on the findings of the study, the data were consolidated and tabulated and necessary conclusions were drawn in the results and discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Women Entrepreneurs and Marketing Struggles

Data in Table 1 provide the marketing problems faced by women entrepreneurs.

Table 1. Women Entrepreneurs and Marketing Struggles (N =55)

Sl. No.	Problems in Marketing	Category	%
1	Lack of communication	Agree	9.1
		Neutral	47.3
		Disagree	43.6
2	Insufficient stock	Agree	21.8
		Neutral	50.9
		Disagree	27.3
3	Heavy competition	Agree	54.5
		Neutral	34.5
		Disagree	10.9
4	Inadequate advertising	Agree	12.7
		Neutral	52.7
		Disagree	34.5
5	Delayed collection	Agree	27.3
		Neutral	40.0
		Disagree	32.7
6	Marketing management	Agree	14.5
		Neutral	54.5
		Disagree	30.9

Among the respondents, majority of the respondents had reported that 'heavy competition' is a major problem in marketing. About 54 per cent of the women entrepreneurs were neutral with the statement of insufficient stock of products in business market. Regarding the marketing problem faced by women entrepreneurs, 54.5 per cent of the women entrepreneurs had to deal with heavy competition in the business and only 10.9 per cent of the respondents disagree with the statement. Thus, majority of the women entrepreneurs agree to heavy competition in the study area.

Problems in Technological Marketing

Data in Table 2 reveal the problems that women entrepreneurs have with technological marketing.

Table 2. Problems in Technological Marketing (N=55)

Sl. No.	Problems in Technological Marketing	Category	%
1	Identity technology	Agree	23.6
		Neutral	49.1
		Disagree	27.3
2	Product skills	Agree	14.5
		Neutral	45.5
		Disagree	40.0
3	Inaccurate branding	Agree	25.5
		Neutral	52.7
		Disagree	21.8
4	Social media access	Agree	27.3
		Neutral	32.7
		Disagree	40.0

The data show that 49.1 percent of the women in business were neutral with the statement that problems exist in identity technology for marketing, while majority were neutral for the problems such as product skills and inaccurate branding.

Out of 55 respondents, 40.0 per cent disagree with the statement of lack of social media access which shows women entrepreneurs are adept in handling the social media.

Limitations Placed on Women Entrepreneurs by their Families and Society

Data in Table 3 provide the limitations placed on women entrepreneurs by their families and society.

Table 3. Limitations Placed on Women Entrepreneurs by their Families and Society

(N=55)

Sl. No.	Problem	Category	%
1	Timing balance	Agree	41.8
		Neutral	41.8
		Disagree	16.4
2	Financial balance	Agree	45.5
		Neutral	47.3
		Disagree	7.3
3	Balancing responsibilities	Agree	38.2
		Neutral	34.5
		Disagree	27.3

As per the data present in Table 3, 41.8 per cent of the women entrepreneurs both agree as well as stay neutral with the statement of balancing time both business and home. Thus, most of the women entrepreneurs agree with facing difficulty in maintaining time balance both in home and business. Majority of the respondents had responded neutral to Financial balance.

Further, over 38 percent of the women respondents had agreed with the statement of 'balancing the responsibilities, which shows that this limitation is a major factor affecting the women entrepreneurs.

Problems of Mental Health faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Marketing

Data in Table 4 reveals the problems of mental health faced by women entrepreneurs in marketing.

Table 4. Problems of Mental Health faced by Women Entrepreneurs

(N=55)

Sl. No.	Mental state in marketing	Category	%
1	Fear of failure	Agree	21.8
		Neutral	47.3
		Disagree	30.9
2	Low risk ability	Agree	27.3
		Neutral	54.5
		Disagree	18.2
3	Low Mental strength	Agree	14.5
		Neutral	43.6
		Disagree	41.8
4	Timidity	Agree	23.6
		Neutral	58.2
		Disagree	18.2

The information provided in Table 4 illustrates that majority of the respondents had reported neutral for the mental health problems such as, Fear of failure, Low risk ability, low mental strength and Timidity.

Financial Issues Encountered by Women entrepreneurs

Table 5 shows the financial issues that women entrepreneurs encounter.

Table 5. Financial Issues Encountered by Women entrepreneurs (N=55)

Sl. No.	Financial problems	Category	%
1	Delayed payment	Strongly Agree	7.3
		Agree	29.1
		Neutral	34.5
		Disagree	25.6
		Strongly Disagree	3.6

Sl. No.	Financial problems	Category	%
2	Collateral security	Strongly agree	14.5
		Agree	30.9
		Neutral	36.4
		Disagree	12.7
		Strongly Disagree	5.5
3	Negative attitude	Strongly agree	32.7
		Agree	32.7
		Neutral	18.2
		Disagree	16.4
		Strongly Disagree	0
4	Lack of knowledge on Banking procedures	Strongly agree	10.9
		Agree	29.1
		Neutral	29.1
		Disagree	21.8
		Strongly Disagree	9.1
5	Financial management Awareness	Strongly agree	10.9
		Agree	38.2
		Neutral	27.3
		Disagree	21.3
		Strongly Disagree	1.8

The data presented in the table reveal that majority of the respondents had reported neutral for financial issues such as collateral security and delayed payment. However, majority had acknowledged that they encountered issues such as Negative attitude, Lack of knowledge on Banking procedures and Financial management Awareness. Women in general face financial challenges, such as elevated operating expenses, restricted backing from banks and government agencies, feeble bank guarantees and elevated anticipations, and a deficiency of confidence from banks, particularly concerning the entrepreneur's

dedication. Simultaneously, they also reported experiencing various challenges related to poor financial assistance, low cash flow and high rental rates, limited access to financing, and the high cost of bank guarantees.

Sandhu (2012) discussed in his research that bank officials take a final decision on a loan application of women entrepreneurs when female owners provide collateral and have given a letter of guarantee from blood relation or husband or a head of the village for setting up enterprises. Women entrepreneurs have been voluntarily excluded from banking services due to lack of literacy as well as complex and lengthy procedures of bank loans (Nehru and Bhardwaj 2013).

Women entrepreneurs are not aware of financial assistance i.e. subsidies, incentives, tax relief etc. provided by the financial institutions and government which result into business failure. This results into women becoming more dependent on their small savings and loan from family and friends for their day-to-day operations which is not sufficient for business sustainability (Goyal and Prakash 2011 ; Nandy and Kumar, 2014)

Level of Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

The level of challenges faced by women entrepreneurs was analyzed using Chi-square goodness of fit test and is displayed in Table 6.

Table .6 Level of Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

Challenge levels	Frequency	Percent	Chi-square value	P value
Low	18	32.7	32.501	0.000**
Moderate	20	36.3		
High	17	30.1		
Total	55	100.0		

** denotes significant at 1% level

Since the p-value is less than 0.01 at a 1% level of significance it is clear that the levels of challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are not equally distributed. The social and cultural obstacles that women entrepreneurs face vary depending on various factors such as the region, poor unit location, fierce rivalry from larger, more established units, lack of transportation, lack of rest and sleep, and non-availability of raw materials.

Awareness Level of Women Entrepreneurs on Government Policy and Programmes

The awareness level of women entrepreneurs on government policy and programmes are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Awareness Level on Government Policy and Programmes (N=55)

Sl. No.	Government Programmes	Category	%
1	Mudra Yojana Scheme	Highly aware	49.1
		Aware	27.3
		Not aware	23.6
2	Bharatiya Mahila Bank	Highly aware	34.5
		Aware	36.4
		Not aware	29.1
3	Annapurna Scheme	Highly aware	9.1
		Aware	20.0
		Not aware	70.9

Sl. No.	Government Programmes	Category	%
4	Credit Guarantee Fund	Highly aware	18.2
		Aware	12.7
		Not aware	69.1
5	WEDS (Women Entrepreneurship Development Scheme)	Highly aware	18.2
		Aware	18.2
		Not aware	63.6
6	The Stand-up India	Highly aware	20.0
		Aware	23.6
		Not aware	56.4

According to the table, majority of the women entrepreneurs were aware of Mudra Yojana Scheme and reasonably aware of Bharathiya Mahila Bank. However, majority of them were not aware of programmes such as Annapurna scheme, Credit Guarantee Fund, WEDS (Women Entrepreneurship Development Scheme) and Stand-up India, which is a cause of concern.

CONCLUSION

The participation of women in entrepreneurial activity makes them not only self-confident but also self-dependent. However, there are several obstacles that they face to reach their goals. The main obstacles were found to be lack of work- life balance and lack of financial support.

The study has revealed that 'heavy competition' is a major problem in marketing, for the women entrepreneurs, while they encountered issues such as Negative attitude, Lack of knowledge on Banking procedures and Financial management Awareness. Majority of the women were not aware of programmes such as Annapurna scheme, Credit Guarantee Fund,

WEDS (Women Entrepreneurship Development Scheme) and the Stand-up India, which is a cause of concern. However, it was also observed that women entrepreneurs are adept in handling the social media. Hence, taking these findings in to account training and workshops need to be conducted that address the needs of women entrepreneurs at different stages of the business life cycle.

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