



A Study on the Status of Women Entrepreneurship in Ramanathapuram District

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Abstract

This study explores the status of women entrepreneurship in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, highlighting the socio-economic conditions, challenges, and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs. The region, predominantly rural and traditional, presents both cultural and infrastructural barriers that affect women's participation in business activities. The research is based on a mixed-method approach involving surveys and interviews with women entrepreneurs across various sectors such as tailoring, handicrafts, small-scale retail, and food processing. Findings indicate that while women show strong interest and potential in entrepreneurship, they often face issues such as limited access to finance, lack of training, and low awareness of government schemes. Social norms and lack of family support also act as major deterrents. Despite these challenges, several women have succeeded in building sustainable businesses with the help of self-help groups (SHGs) and local support networks.

The study concludes that improving access to credit, enhancing entrepreneurial education, and increasing awareness about support programs are crucial to fostering women entrepreneurship in the district. Empowering women through entrepreneurship can lead to broader socio-economic development and gender equality in rural areas.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Ramanathapuram District, Rural Development, Socio-Economic Challenges, Government Schemes, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Financial Inclusion, Gender Empowerment, Small-Scale Enterprises, Entrepreneurial Training.

Introduction

An entrepreneur is the organiser of an economic venture, especially, one who organises, owns, manages and assumes the risk of the business. They may also be defined as the economic functionary, who undertakes such responsibilities which cannot be insured or capitalised or salaried. They make utilisation of available resources for the creation of economic goods.

Entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in the economic development of any country and are considered to be the most important economic agents for the economic augmentation of any country. They act as the owners, producers, coordinators, market-makers, decision-makers, risk-takers and innovators. They provide an improved allocation of resources for the best interest of their enterprises as well as the country. They can be called as the economic pioneers initiating changes in the economy. They strive to increase productivity and improve the quality of output through the application of more efficient production techniques, better plant layout and effective marketing policies.

Among the world of entrepreneurship, one part of it is focused in this study. Women's entrepreneurship seems to be a real, fundamental economic force that's reshaping the world. Women-owned entities in the formal sector represent approximately 37 percent of enterprises globally-a market

worthy of attention by businesses and policy makers alike. Women entrepreneurs tend to be more successful because of their trusted status in the community. Controlling for firm characteristics, research suggests that women-owned firms outperform those owned by male counterparts. Then educated women followed and few have made a significant mark over the years. However, what has not been recognised is that many uneducated women are also enthusiastically raising family incomes through micro ventures and reinvesting their earnings in their families and communities. These women also inspire other women in their localities to pursue their dreams through entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

In Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu, lies an emerging town, by the name of Kilakarai. With a general population of 38,365 owing to the 2016 census, this town shows promising potential to economically improve at a wide scale, thereby uplifting the general economic status of Ramanathapuram. With entrepreneurship generally aiding in economic development, this study views the status of women entrepreneurship in Keelakarai.

Statement of the Problem

Unlike many working women who are finding it difficult to manage their professional and personal life, many females set an example. The uneducated women entrepreneurs, especially

in rural areas, still do not have access to technical and financial support that can give a boost to their businesses from a domestic to a commercial level. There are cultural and societal norms that hinder equal participation of women in ventures that men undertake. But women have to contribute to entrepreneurial activities in the best way possible. Collectively, women entrepreneurs look different than their male counterparts. Their lower employment numbers and growth aspirations have historically led to questions of how to "fix" them. Hence, it is providently important to analyse and find solutions for improvement of this sector. This study aims at finding their status and the potential problems faced during this venture.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the work-life balance of women entrepreneurs in Kilakarai.
- To interpret potential problems encountered at the initiation.
- To analyse the role of government schemes in women entrepreneurship.
- To analyse the women entrepreneur's level of knowledge in this sector.

Research Methodology

- **Primary Data:** The main source of the primary data were collected directly from 50 women entrepreneurs in Ramanathapuram District and Kilakarai with the questionnaire prepared accordingly. The questionnaire was created with the aim of eliciting information from the women entrepreneurs regarding the problems faced by them and also tested their knowledge in this field.
- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data were collected mainly from journals, articles, publications, books, relevant websites etc.

Review of Literature

Anita Tripathy Lal's (November 15, 2012) main objective of this research was to study the significant rise of Women Entrepreneurs in India and how it has evolved since the pre-independence days (before 1947), during the British colonial days. The study also analysed the reasons that have prompted the women entrepreneurs to unleash their entrepreneurial energies into start-ups. Based on both qualitative and quantitative analyses the growth of women entrepreneurship in India have been studied into four different periods-Pre-Independence Period (before 1947), Post-Independence Period (after 1947), Post-Liberalization Period (after 1991) and Post-Global Recession period (2008 onwards). The study finally concluded to what extent the various support systems in India can further foster a conducive ecosystem for the Women Entrepreneurs in India.

Cohoon, Wadhwa and Mitchell (2010) presented a detailed exploration of men & women entrepreneur's motivations, background and experiences. This study identified the top five financial and psychological factors motivating women to become entrepreneurs. These are the desire to build wealth, the wish to capitalise their own business ideas they had, the appeal of startup culture, a long-standing desire to own their own company and working with someone else did not appeal to them. The study concluded that the women are more concerned about protecting intellectual capital than their counterparts. Mentoring is very important to women, which provides encouragement & financial support of business

partners, experiences & well-developed professional networks.

Sudha Menon (2010) in this inspirational book follows the journey of some of India's most admired women achievers who have made a difference to society with their staller work and other pursuits that touch our lives, in more ways than once. This book vividly touches upon issues like what makes the woman professional, achiever, is there a level playing field for women, is there something males can learn from their female colleagues etc. This book is a well-researched effort to evaluate the achievements of leading women professionals.

Tambunan, Tulus, (2009) focused in his article mainly on women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises based on data analysis and review of recent key literature. This study found that in Asian developing countries SMEs are gaining overwhelming importance; more than 95% of all firms in all sectors on average per country. The study also depicted the fact that representation of women entrepreneurs in this region is relatively low due to factors like low level of education, lack of capital and cultural or religious constraints. Taariq Masood and Ahmad I. M. (2009) suggested that education and wage rates significantly and positively determined urban women's labour force participation rate, but not that of rural women. Unemployment Rate significantly reduced the labour force participation rate in rural areas, but not the urban; while, sex ratio significantly increased the participation rate in rural and urban areas. Number of young children (0-4 years) in the household negatively affected the participation rate for rural and urban areas. Muslim Population and Scheduled Caste/Tribes were also significant determinants of Women's decision to participate in the labour force.

Almaz Negash (Dec 2006) in this study describes that, in the majority of poor nations, mothers, not fathers, have the most influence on their children. Mothers are the ones who dictate the decisions on whether or not children are sent to school, what school they go to, and how much time they spend working for the family. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. Thus, concerted action to educate women, give them equal access to credit, and generally empower them, are critical components in battling all of the above-mentioned ills. Societies, governments and non-governmental organisations around the world should come together and make a concentrated effort to empower and grant equality to women.

Torch Burch (Nov 18th 2013), experiences that women entrepreneurs see the world through a different lens and, in turn, do things differently. Though the women are operating new businesses, yet they face a huge equality gap. In only seven countries: Panama, Thailand, Ghana, Ecuador, Nigeria, Mexico and Uganda women take part in business at rates equal to men 's; in some countries, like Pakistan, they rarely take part at all. Even when women are active business owners, they do not reach their potential. When it comes to finance, women face particular hurdles, from a lack of collateral to discriminatory regulations and ingrained gender bias. Financial institutions must do a better job of banking on women's potential by thinking creatively and forging partnerships, to give more women a shot at the resources that can enable them to start up or scale up. Narrowing the gender gap in employment will increase global income per person.

Ackerly (1995) noted that underpinning most credit interventions in Bangladesh was an implicit model of the

empowered woman and concluded that women's access to the market was the primary route for their empowerment knowledge which comes through market access and warned against the likelihood of overwork, fatigue and malnutrition were loans used to promote women's labour involvement without also promoting their market access.

Montgomery and Hulme (1996) found that only 9% of first-time female borrowers were primary managers of loan-funded activities while 87% described their role in terms of family partnerships. But 33% of first-time male borrowers had sole authority over the loan-assisted activity while 56% described it as a family partnership. They also found that access to loans did little to change the management of cash within the household for either female or male loanees. Interpreting reports of joint management as disguised male dominance in decision-making, the authors concluded that access to loans had done little to empower women.

Maahir Virani in his essay demonstrates the history of women with unique leadership capabilities for example, Razia Sultana, Rani of Jhansi, Sarojini Naidu and Indira Gandhi. Most women were able to demonstrate the leadership quality only on their home fronts, as in Indian society man has always acted as the masters. Though some women have shown their mettle, therefore, empowerment of women is the prerequisite to transform a developing country into a developed country. Educational attainment and economic participation are also the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. In India, women are showing steady improvement in professional institutes, health and non-traditional sectors like police, defence, administration, media and research fields. This essay concludes that it is a wake-up call for women to awake from their deep slumber and understand the true meaning of their empowerment.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is a statistical method that is used to discover if there is a relationship between two variables/datasets. It is also used to understand the nature of relationships between two individual variables. And how strong that relationship may be. Since this research aims to analyse the significant relationship among the different factors contributing to a women entrepreneur's journey, this tool has been adopted here.

Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation

The Pearson correlation coefficient represents the relationship between the two variables, measured on the same interval or ratio scale. It measures the strength of the relationship between the two continuous variables.

The coefficient not only states the presence or absence of the correlation between the two variables but also determines the exact extent to which those variables are correlated. A positive correlation result means both variables increase in relation to each other and a negative correlation results states that when one variable decreases, the other increases. The formula for coefficient is:

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient formula is as follows:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Σ

Where $x = (x - \bar{x})$, $y = (y - \bar{y})$

Application of Karl Pearson's Coefficient of correlation:

The next analysis is regarding the relationship between the entrepreneur's age and their educational qualification.

Table 1: Age

	15-29	30-44	44-59	60+
x	37	13	-	-

Table 2: Educational Qualification

	Higher Secondary	UG	PG	Others
y	5	35	9	1

Calculations

$$\begin{aligned}
 R &= \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2} \times \sqrt{N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2}} \\
 &= \frac{4 \times 640 - (50)(50)}{\sqrt{4 \times 1538 - (50)^2} \times \sqrt{4 \times 1332 - (50)^2}} \\
 &= \frac{60}{\sqrt{3832} \times \sqrt{2828}} \\
 &= \frac{60}{62 \times 5} \\
 &= \frac{60}{310} \\
 &= 0.1935
 \end{aligned}$$

Interpretation

The coefficient of correlation(r) is 0.1935. Hence it is concluded that there is a low positive correlation between the adopted two variables. This indicates that there is low but positive correlation between an entrepreneur's age and their educational qualification.

Findings

- The majority 74% of the respondents are in the category of 15-29 years old.
- It is also clear that the majority 56% of the respondents are in the status of being unmarried.
- The majority 52% of the respondents are in a joint family.
- It is also clear that the majority 66% of the respondents are in the category of 0-3. This shows that women entrepreneurs have increased at a rapid amount during the year 2020-2021
- The majority 42% of the respondents are in the general others category
- The majority 36% of the respondents have money earning as the primary driving factor.
- The majority 36% of the respondents have financial issues as the primary driving factor.
- The majority 80% of the respondents have overcome their initial challenges
- It is also clear that the majority 66% of the respondents have obtained funds from savings/family support.
- The majority 54% of the respondents have obtained funds from savings/family support.
- The majority 76% of the respondents are not beneficiaries of government schemes.
- The majority 42% of the respondents are not aware of these government schemes.
- It is also clear that the majority 36% of the respondents are in the category of 1-5 hours.

- It is also clear that the majority 48% of the respondents are in the category of 2021-23.
- The majority 82% of the respondents have started their first company it is also clear that the majority 45% of the respondents are still successfully running their previous businesses.
- It is clear that the majority 74% of the respondents are in the category of having fairly profitable ventures.
- It is also clear that the majority 44% of the respondents are operating within Ramanathapuram (District level).
- It is clear that the majority 40% of the respondents have chosen good customer relationships.
- It is clear that the majority 80% of the respondents are in the category of using social media for promotion.
- It is clear that the majority 50% of the respondents are using WhatsApp for promotion.
- It is also clear that the majority 60% of the respondent's state too much work as the reason for not using social media promotion.
- It is also clear that the majority 46% of the respondents have gained success within 1 year.
- It is also clear that the majority 80% of the respondents are satisfied with their company.
- It is also clear that the majority 40% of the respondents are in the category feeling unmotivated.
- It is also clear that the majority 64% of the respondents have not registered officially.
- It is also clear that the majority 90% of the respondents are willing to attend entrepreneurship workshops.

Suggestions

Women entrepreneurs are generally having a good status in the researched location, but there are a few areas that could be improved:

- Based on what was interpreted in table 4.2.3, the major problems faced by women entrepreneurs can be reduced if they had all of the below characteristics-hardwork, proper decision-making, good customer relationship, building social network, knowledge about the market and good communication.
- Based on the willingness of the respondents, it can be inferred that conducting workshops will be beneficial for the overall improvement of businesses.
- Other reasons for the need of workshops are:
 - Though the respondents were aware of the government schemes available, they were not beneficiaries of it due to lack of knowledge about the schemes, hence workshops can be conducted to spread awareness regarding the benefits of these schemes and the procedure for applying to it.
 - Since financial issue is regarded as the major challenge for women entrepreneurs, workshops should also shed light on alternatives sources for funding businesses such as self-help groups.
 - Workshops can also act as an opportunity for the entrepreneurs to meet like-minded people and share tips and tricks for gaining success.
 - Since some of the respondents could not adopt social media for promotion due to lack of knowledge, workshops can also be conducted for spreading awareness on this method specifically.
- Through the survey, general suggestions were obtained from the respondents regarding notable mistakes to be avoided, some of them are mentioned below:

- Being afraid to fail
- Being disorganised
- Hiring too soon
- Expanding too quickly
- Overpromising or under delivering
- Selling low quality products
- Lack of Consistency and confidence
- Lack of time management

Conclusion

Women now constitute a decisive force with which the future destiny of the world is inextricably blended. Its natural corollary is that it is most essential to help her throw away the restraints that an inequitable tradition has been using to suppress the enormous potential inherent in womanhood, lest universal peace and harmony should ever remain a distant dream. This study has concluded that women entrepreneurs in the researched area are having a fairly moderate status. However, there is room for improvement in this sector. The researchers have suggested a few methods for the upliftment of women entrepreneurs based on the data collected.

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