



**Biotica
Research
Today**

Vol 2:12 ¹²⁸⁷
2020 ¹²⁹⁰

Women Entrepreneurs: Problem and Prospects of Skill Development

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Open Access

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Keywords

Awareness, Business, Entrepreneurs, Women

Article History

Received in 20th December 2020

Received in revised form 22nd December 2020

Accepted in final form 23rd December 2020

E-mail: bioticapublications@gmail.com

How to cite this article?

Raj and Kumar, 2020. Women Entrepreneurs: Problem and Prospects of Skill Development. Biotica Research Today 2(12): 1287-1290.

Abstract

Women are agents of human development, nurturers of humanity, catalyst in agriculture, economic development, natural resource management protection of the environment, etc. However, they suffer from lack of information, right to resources, control of assets, credits training, and new technologies. Women are successful in all spheres and have shifted from the kitchen to a higher level of professional activities. After two decades of independence, incredible changes have been noticed in the status of women in Indian society. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been emerging with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in society. Women are an important resource and have the power to transform human misery. Due to the growing industrialization, urbanization, social legislation, and the spread of higher education and awareness, the emergence of Women-owned businesses is highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. This paper aims to critically analyse the problems and prospects of women's entrepreneurship and suggest strategies to empower them.

Introduction

"I don't believe in failure. It is not a failure if you enjoyed the process." - Oprah Winfrey

Perhaps entrepreneurship is the simplest word to explain an incredible zeal to succeed. There is a paradigm shift in the roles women play in society in changing times. More and more women today are moving out of their comfort zone and trying their hands at things no one ever guessed they were capable of. Gradually women are stepping out of their homes into workplaces. Progressively women are getting out there and starting their entrepreneurial ventures. Since the turn of the century, women are not only confined in their kitchen but due to industrialization, globalization, and social legislation come out from their comfort zone. Through the binge of education and awareness, women have shifted from the kitchen to a higher level of professional activities.

In India, the concept of women entrepreneurship is of recent origin. Women's workforce ratio in the country is increasing due to the increase in the women's literacy rate in India. The government of India has also given appropriate importance to women entrepreneurship in the country and several schemes have been introduced for the development of women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated field from a very early age, but time has changed. It is estimated that women entrepreneurs presently comprise about 10% of the total number of entrepreneurs in India, with the percentage growing every year.

Status of Women in India

The status of women in India has been a subject of huge variation over a fast few millennia. In ancient times women were equally treated as men, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been hectic. In Hindu scriptures, a woman is admired and preached in the name of Durga, Saraswati, Parvati, and Kali, but in real life, she is treated as abla (weak and dependent). Women in traditional societies are still confined to the four walls of a home, children, household affairs, and family rituals.

Women's participation in the labour force has remained lower than male participation. This is because they were not skill-oriented and technically sound. National sample survey (68th) round, Women percentage in the rural sector is 24.8% in 2011-12 and 54.3% for males. There is an acute dearth of employment relevant skills for entrepreneurship among rural women means skill development can be used for promoting women. Women face multiple-barrier in accessing skills and productive employment.

Strategies for Entrepreneurship Development among Women

Entrepreneurship development leads to improved productivity, employment, self-employment, economic growth, and consequently poverty reduction.

Linking Skill to Entrepreneurship

To ensure employability, employment, entrepreneurship, and self-employment amongst skilled women the skilling curriculum should have a fair dose of entrepreneurship and know how to starts one's enterprise. Women entrepreneurship must be encouraged especially in rural areas, where we need to create more diverse opportunities. Necessary credit support along with market linkages also need to provide. Setting up incubation centers and a cluster-based approach would give impetus to this. Soft skill training is also an indispensable part of skilling for both employment as well as entrepreneurship.

Reskilling and Upskilling

Along with fresh skilling, women require a sustainable reskilling and upskilling ecosystem, which besides making the workforce present and future-ready, would also address the concerns of women who also address concerns of women who for several reasons including family commitments, take a break from work and then want to re-join. The skilling ecosystem also needs to address the requirements of persons restoring early and those seeking career progressions.

Role of Apprenticeship in Skilling

The need to strengthen and popularize apprenticeship in India is immense and immediate as it is one of the best ways of on-the-job skilling and increasing the employability of a person manifold. Apprenticeship needs to be popularized and incentivized with measures like preference in recruitment, higher stipends for female apprentices, and assistance to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) engaging apprentices.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of male/ female-owned enterprises in rural and urban areas (Source: msme.gov.in)

SECTOR	MALE	FEMALE	ALL
Rural	77.76	22.24	100
Urban	81.58	18.42	100
All	79.63	20.37	100

Business Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs

Exposure is necessary for women entrepreneurs to other sectors as well as so that they can cross barriers and open their minds towards different business ideas apart from their sectors traditionally believed to be for women. Women must have to go beyond the conventional sectors and look out for opportunities based on the resources and skills available.

- Handloom, handicraft, and fashion are vast industry and is growing at a great pace with different innovative creations.
- Agriculture is the backbone of the Assam economy, is also witnessing tremendous growth. More than 100 species of bamboo are naturally available in this region with 216 fish species, out of which 150 species have ornamental importance and 50 species have overseas ornamental value. The tremendous growth in this sector also gives various business opportunities like Agri clinics, cold chain fruits & vegetables, livestock feed production, etc.
- The beauty and wellness industry in India is booming, with tremendous potential for growth in the future years. The Indian wellness market offers huge business opportunities waiting to be harnessed with significant penetration especially in areas like nutrition, rejuvenation, fitness, the opening of a beauty salon, gym, spa, hygiene products, beauty clinic business, beauty professionals, hairstyles, makeup artist, yoga and fitness professionals, nail technicians and spa therapists.
- Another vibrant activity and a multi-billion industry in India are the tourism industry. The various business trends in the tourism sector and are adventure tourism, event planning, taxi and bus Shuttle business, ferry business, boat cruise business, pilgrimage traveling company, and tourism-related topic, travel agency.

Problems of Women Entrepreneurship

Finance Problem

The major challenge women entrepreneurs' face is not able to access enough capital to start up their business. Most banks and investors don't give women capital to start up a business, because of their lack of trust in them to pay back. This is because some of the women may not be fully grounded in their knowledge of the business, therefore having a bad business plan. It can also be due to the reason that the woman may not have collateral.

Discrimination from Society

Most people still have the mentality that a woman should not be allowed to take some certain business in society. They believe those businesses are meant for men and a woman cannot be fully competent in it. But this belief is not true, because their women who have even done far better than men in some certain areas. The solution to this challenge is that the woman should keep at what they are doing and do let people's talk make them weak. When you have made your grounds in that business, then the things been said by the society will now turn in favour of the women.

Low Risk-Bearing Ability

Women in India are by nature weak, shy, and mild. They cannot bear the amount of risk which is essential for running an enterprise. Lack of education, training, and financial support from outsiders also reduces their ability to bear the risk involved in enterprises.

Lack of Entrepreneurial Aptitude

Lack of entrepreneurial aptitude is a matter of concern for women entrepreneurs. They have no entrepreneurial bent of mind. Even after attending various training programs on entrepreneurship, they fail to tide over the risks and troubles that may come up in organizational work.

Gender Inequality

India is a male-dominated traditional society where women are not supposed to be equal to the menfolk. They are treated as subordinate to husbands and men, physically weak and lesser confident to be able to shoulder the responsibility of the entrepreneur.

Lack of Self-Confidence

Women entrepreneurs because of their inherent nature, lack self-confidence which is essentially a motivating factor in running an enterprise successfully. They have to strive hard to strike a balance between managing a family and managing an enterprise.

Government Intervention to Support Women Entrepreneur

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

This scheme aims to offer 10 million Indian youth meaningful, industry-relevant, skill-based training. Under this scheme, the trainees are offered a financial reward and a government certification on successful completion of training and assessment. This helps them in securing a job for a better future. This scheme is implemented for any candidates of Indian nationality.

Apprenticeship Training Scheme (ATS)

There are five categories of apprentices namely- trade apprentices, graduate, technician, vocational, and optional trade apprentice. A monthly stipend is paid to candidates by the employer. This scheme aims to make women more competent for a job in a different sector.

Skill India Mission

To encourage women in starting their ventures, the government launched a scheme, namely in the area of skill development is a skill India mission. As technology becomes even more pervasive and job roles evolve, there is a strong need on the part of the government to bridge the skill gap. And, it is this need that skill India mission has been addressing since its launch in 2015.

Help for Entrepreneurial and Managerial Development

MSME DIs regularly conducts EDPs/ MDPs for existing and potential entrepreneurs and charge a fee for such courses. To encourage more entrepreneurs from among the SC/ST, women, and physically challenged groups, it is proposed that such beneficiaries will not be charged any fees but, instead of paying a stipend of Rs. 500.00 per capita per month. 50,000 entrepreneurs will be trained in IT, Fashion Technology, Agro & Food Processing, Catering, biotechnology Pharmaceutical, etc. through specialized courses run by MSME.

Support for training and Employment Program for Women (STEP)

STEP scheme aims to provide skills that give employability to women to provide competencies and skills that enable women to become self-employed. The assistance under the STEP scheme will be available in any sector for imparting skills related to employability and entrepreneurship, including but not limited to Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Tailoring, Switching, etc. Swavalamban Kishori Yojna.

Conclusion

Women constitute almost half of the total population in India but they are not enjoying their freedoms, equalities, privileges, on par with their male

counterparts. Since the implementation of planning in India, several strategies were made to support women entrepreneurship such as information, education, and communication (IEC), Linking skill to entrepreneurship, Skilling for future jobs, Reskilling and upskilling, etc. some of the government intervention like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Apprenticeship training scheme (ATS), Skill India mission, etc. were meant to support the entrepreneurship development among women. Women being the vital gender of the overall population have great capacity and potential to contribute to the overall economic development. Therefore, programs and policies need to be customized to not just encourage women's entrepreneurship but also implement strategies that can help support entrepreneurial culture among women. Developing countries are definitely in dire

need to encourage women entrepreneurship as the women workforce is promptly available to exploit the unexplored dimension of business ventures.

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