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**CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Entrepreneurship among women has been a recent concern. Women has become aware of their existence, there rights and there working situation. However women of the middle class are not too eager to alter their role in fear of social backlash. The progress is more visible among the upper class families in urban cities. The paper focus on women entrepreneurship. The paper slides from the era of fifties to the 21st century how the situations has being changed. Also it consist of the various challenges being faced but them and how to overcome them. Along with that how gender gap affects the process of women entrepreneurs.*

**KEYWORDS**

women entrepreneurs, developing country, women power.

**INTRODUCTION**

**W**omen entrepreneurs have been designated as the new engines for growth and the rising stars of the economies in developing countries to bring prosperity and welfare. A variety of stakeholders has pointed at them as an important 'untapped source' of economic growth and development. The World Economic Forum identified women entrepreneurs as "the way forward" at their annual meeting in 2012. Others speak of women entrepreneurs as if they are the 'New Women's Movement'. They state: "forget aid, focus on foreign investment in women entrepreneurs as key drivers for growth and development". The growth of the proportion of women entrepreneurs in developing countries has drawn the attention of both the academic and the development sector. Donors, international public institutions, national and local governments, NGOs, private companies, charities, knowledge institutes and business associations have initiated programs or policies to promote and develop women's entrepreneurship. They initiate programs for capacity-building of entrepreneurial skills, strengthening women's networks, provide finance and trainings, or design policies that enable more and stronger start-ups and business growth. They all claim that women entrepreneurship is essential for growth and development. Some even argue that women entrepreneurs' contribution tends to be higher than that resulting from entrepreneurial activity of men. In recent years, the general attention to women and entrepreneurship in developing countries has increased to a great extent and the focus on this 'untapped source' of growth seems to be indispensable nowadays for development practitioners and policy makers. However, despite this growing number of initiatives and resources made available to promote and develop women's entrepreneurship in developing countries, women still own and manage fewer businesses than men, they earn less money with their businesses that grow slower, are more likely to fail and women tend to be more necessity entrepreneurs.

**WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS FROM 15<sup>TH</sup> TO 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY****KEY CHANGES IN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN LAST FIVE DECADES**

- **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE FIFTIES:** Compulsive factors led to the creation of women entrepreneurs.
- **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE SIXTIES:** Women began to aspire but also accepted the social cultural traditions.
- **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE SEVENTIES:** The women in this decade opened up new frontier. They had not only aspiration but ambition
- **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE EIGHTIES:** Women were educated in highly sophisticated, technological and professional education. They became equally contributing partners.
- **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE NINETIES:** This was the first time when the concept of best rather than male heir was talked about.
- **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE 21st Century:** "Jill of all trades"

**ISSUES/PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

- **Problem of Finances arrangement:** - Finance is said to be the "life blood" of every business undertaking, be it large or medium or small scale enterprise. Usually women entrepreneurs face the problems of shortage of finance on two important grounds. Firstly, women do not generally have property on their own names to use that as collateral securities for obtaining loans/funds from banks and other financial institutions. Thus their access to external sources is very limited. Secondly, the banks also consider women less credit worthy and discourage women borrowers on the belief that they cannot repay back the amount of loans taken by them.
- **Scarcity of raw materials required for productive capacities:** - They have to even face the problems of scarcity of raw-materials and necessary inputs. On the top of this, is the high prices of raw materials, on one hand and getting raw materials at minimum discount rates are the other.
- **Limited mobility factor in case of women entrepreneurs:** - Unlike men, women mobility in India is highly limited due to many factors/reasons. A single women asking for room is still looked with suspicion. Cumbersome exercise involved in starting with an enterprise coupled with officials humiliating attitude towards women compels them to give up their spirit of surviving in enterprise altogether.
- **Family responsibilities, ties as well as commitments:** - In India, mainly a woman's duty is to look after her children and manage the other members of the family. Man plays a secondary role only. In case of married women she has to strike a fine balance between her business and family. Her total involvement in family leaves little or almost no time or energy to be diverted for the business activities. Support and approval of husbands seems to be necessary condition for women entry into business. Accordingly, the educational level and family background of husbands also influences women participation in the field of enterprise.
- **Lack of education and prevalent levels of illiteracy amongst women:** - In India, around 3/5th (60%) of women are still illiterate. Illiteracy is the root cause of socio-economic barriers or hurdles. Due to lack of education and that to qualitative education, women are not aware of business, technology and market knowledge. Also lack of education causes low achievement motivation amongst women. Thus lack of education creates problems before women to set up competitive enterprises.
- **Domination by male and ideology of male dominated society:** - Male chauvinism is still prevalent in many parts of the country yet. The constitution of India speaks about the equality between both the sexes, i.e. men and women. But in practice, women are looked upon as "abla" i.e. weak in all respects. Thus women suffer from a number of problems, in a nutshell in a male dominated society, women are not treated equal to men. This in turn, serves as a barrier to woman's entry into business.
- **Lesser risk and uncertainty bearing attitude:** - Women in India lead a protected life. They are even less educated and economically not stable neither self-dependent. All these factors reduce their ability to bear risks and uncertainties involved in a business unit, which is the most important criteria of every business activity.



**EXPLAINING THE GENDER GAP: PROXIMATE AND ULTIMATE DETERMINANTS**

Recent global surveys indicate that the gender gap in entrepreneurship persists at different levels and varying widely across countries. Yet a quick scan of current research suggests that there are some commonalities as to the proximate and ultimate determinants of these differences.

- **Inadequate training and access to information:** - One challenge often mentioned in research on women entrepreneurs in developing countries is that they enjoy a relatively low level of education and skill training. This, combined with a lack of career guidance, generally seems to limit their access to various publically and privately offered support services including business development services and information on business growth. Others found that a lack of experience and skills also accounted for the fact that women entrepreneurs had a preference in industry.
- **Work-family interface:**-Another more recently frequent mentioned challenge is the combination of the business with family responsibilities, which may undermine the success of the business. Women entrepreneurs indicate that they deploy several strategies to cope with the double workload and challenges deriving from combining business with family. But while self-employment may provide flexibility,. Furthermore, the location of the business at home may also undermine the legitimacy of the business as perceived by customers and creditors. Furthermore, some studies indicate that women strongly rely on support from husbands, partners, and relatives in order to successfully start and grow a business .Much more research is needed on the topic of coping strategies to combine business with family in general and specifically, on how to engage husbands and other family members in supporting women entrepreneurs in developing countries.
- **Women's safety and gender based violence:**-Others identify the issue of safety and protection of women entrepreneurs, especially those operating in the informal economy. Even though less documented in academic research, there are numerous stories of killings, harassment and rape of female vendors and micro-business owners. This results in stress, constant fear and not having the opportunity to freely choose your business location and time of opening hours which seriously limits the chances and choices of becoming a successful entrepreneur for women in some developing countries. However, more research is needed on for example alternative coping strategies (besides policy frameworks) and how women that are facing these challenges can best be supported.
- **Lack of societal support:** Furthermore, scholars point out that normative constraints and societal attitudes based on cultural and religious beliefs in some countries are not supportive of the work of women in general or that of women in entrepreneurship in particular . In a variety of countries, the perception is that entrepreneurship is an appropriate career choice for men and not women, or only for the poor and not the educated, which in most cases are women. These perceptions are mostly based on the association of entrepreneurship with traditional male stereotypes.
- **Legal barriers and procedures:** Varying across countries, the lack of government support in terms of policy, laws and services has been identified as a barrier for women entrepreneurs across countries, most research indicates that regulations, taxation and legal barriers can pose serious obstacles for running and starting a business. This may affect both men and women to a certain extent and more research is needed to identify country specific issues. Data from the annual report Women Business and the Law (World Bank, 2012) measured that in all Middle Eastern and North African countries, women have fewer inheritance rights than men and moreover, there are 1 or more legal differences between women and men that limit women's economic opportunity in over 75% of the world's economies. According to that same report, women only own 1% of the world's property and in 2/3 of countries, legal rights of women decline with marriage, 44 countries restrict the number of hours women can work and 71 countries restrict the types of industries.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR THE GROWTH OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

Women entrepreneurs need to be given confidence, independence, and mobility to come out of their paradoxes. The following measures are suggested to empower the women to seize various opportunities and face challenges in business.

- There should be a continuous attempt to inspire, encourage, motivate and co-operate women entrepreneurs.
- An Awareness programs should be conducted on a mass scale with the intention of creating awareness among women about the various areas to conduct business.
- Attempts should be there to enhance the standards of education of women in general as well making effective provisions for their training, practical experience and personality development programs, to improvise their over-all personality standards.
- Organize training programs to develop professional competencies in managerial, leadership, marketing, financial, production process, profit planning, maintaining books of accounts and other skills. This will encourage women to undertake business.
- Vocational training to be extended to women community that enables them to understand the production process and production management.
- Skill development to be done in women's polytechnics and industrial training institutes. Skills are put to work in training-cum-production workshops.
- Educational institutes should tie up with various government and non-government agencies to assist in entrepreneurship development mainly to plan business projects.
- International, National, Local trade fairs, Industrial exhibitions, seminars and conferences should be organized to help women to facilitate interaction with other women entrepreneurs
- Women in business should be offered soft loans & subsidies for encouraging them into industrial activities. The financial institutions should provide more working capital assistance both for small scale venture and large scale ventures.
- The weaker section could raise funds through various schemes and incentives provided by the government to develop entrepreneurs in the state.

**LIFE OF AN ENTREPRENEUR – HINAL SHAH BHUPTANI (INDIA)**

Hina Shah is a home maker, a classical dancer, an entrepreneur, a painter, an academician and the director of ICECD. In a man's world, she has created a niche for herself with path breaking innovative ideas. She began her career in 1976 in the plastic packaging industry and with a belief that economic empowerment is the tool for overall empowerment of women, she piloted a development strategy in 1980 that viewed women as an active participant in economic development. In 1986, she transformed her vision into an initiative "International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Career Development (ICECD)" which today is recognized as "Centre for excellence" by United Nations. She has thus facilitated thousands of deprived women to become entrepreneurs all over India and the developing world. Hina Shah started her first

Programme, termed Entrepreneurship Development Programme for women with 25women from Gujarat, out of which 16 women established non-traditional businesses. Shah became instrumental in initiating and institutionalizing Women Economic Empowerment strategy in countries such as Zambia, Bangladesh, Lesotho, Botswana, Cameroon, Malaysia, Philippines, Jordan, Sri Lanka, Guyana, Ivory Coast and St. Kitts. Her efforts have created a consolidated wealth of Rs. 195 crores in India and Rs. 620 crores in other countries till date. Her mission has always been to create successful and persistent women entrepreneurs, who will emerge as job creators and not job seekers. Mrs. Hinal Shah Bhuptani's vision is to turn women from job seekers to job provider. The core idea of "she can you can" initiative by Hina shah was Tupperware's basic ideology of empowering women and giving them wings to fly. She Can You Can, in essence, is an initiative to capture stories of women going beyond the ordinary. Focusing on empowering the women of today, the campaign endeavors to bring out the hidden achievers while helping the womenfolk lead a self reliant lifestyle. The campaign seeks to inspire many more women, to come forward to start dreaming and start achieving. Hina Shah's relentless efforts to change the face of the deprived, dependent women of rural India created a noteworthy impact. These are the women who hardly involved themselves in income generation and always despaired. Their status improved as they began their little businesses, earned, started spending profits on improving their lives; family diet; health and other essentials, and started sending their children to school. Their self-esteem and confidence blossomed. They have savings in place, and are confident, healthier, better fed and housed, better informed and respected in the community. There has been an irrevocable change in the role of women in the deeply backward areas. Ms. Hina Shah has been chosen as a social entrepreneur, who in the past 3 years has led over 13,000 widows of Gujarat to become successful entrepreneurs, and is currently reaching out to over 2500 Primitive Tribal Youth of the State to become self sufficient. Her contribution to the development of Gujarat over the last 22 years has been significant, for which she has received various national

laurels. Having spread her wings to over 52 Asian, African and Pacific countries world over, she is a huge source of inspiration to many who have changed the course of their lives to follow her leadership.

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