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EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SMALL BUSINESS: A EMPIRICAL STUDY IN KHAMMAM DISTRICT OF A.P

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNA
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
KAKATIYA UNIVERSITY P. G. COLLEGE
KHAMMAM

DR. T. GOPI
ASST. PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
KAKATIYA UNIVERSITY P. G. COLLEGE
KHAMMAM

ABSTRACT

Empowerment of women and Entrepreneurship complement each other. Empowerment enables the entrepreneurs to be motivated to accomplish the set goals. It also enables the women to think independently and make their own perceptions and judgment. Rural women need support counseling and training to become empowered. Dissemination of innovative approaches and new knowledge developed is also extremely important in furthering the cause of entrepreneurship. A positive relationship between Women Entrepreneurships and Women Empowerment is found to be significant in the study.

KEYWORDS

entrepreneurship, small business, women empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in the role of entrepreneurship and small business development as providers of employment, contributors to Gross National Product, boosters of economic development and address to a large number of problems being faced by the community in general and educated youth in particular. Small business and entrepreneurship in India are the prime-force in generating productive employment and ensuing a more equitable distribution of income in the process of economic development of the country. It facilitates effective mobilization of resources of capital and skills and helps to reduce poverty and unemployment. Empowerment enables the entrepreneurs to be motivated to accomplish the set goals. It also enables the women to think independently and make their own perceptions and judgments (Vijalaxmi2008). In this backdrop this study has been undertaken to examine the level of empowerment of sample rural women entrepreneurs before and after starting the small enterprise.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the change in the status of rural women Empowerment through entrepreneurship in select study area.
2. To find out the factors responsible for successful performance of women Entrepreneurship
3. To suggest measures to promote empowerment of women entrepreneurship in rural areas.

HYPOTHESIS

Women entrepreneurship leads to women empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 283 women respondents engaging in small business selected from 26 villages in khammam District of Andrapradesh . Out of the total sample, 141 respondents were chosen from the tribal villages and rest of 142 from non tribal villages. The economic activities of sample women are presented in Appendix-I.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

To know the improvement in the status of the respondent women entrepreneurs both in family and society, after starting the enterprises their opinions are collected (Table-1). About 64 per cent of the respondents state that there is some change of progressive nature in their status both in family and society. Another 34 per cent felt that their status has improved and a recognized change has occurred. Together, 98 per cent respondents opened that their status after starting the units has improved in the family and also in the society.

TABLE 1: STATUS OF THE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AFTER STARTING THE UNIT

Sl.No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	No Change	5	1.8
2	Some change	182	64.3
3	Recognized change occurred	96	33.9
	Total	283	100.0

Source: Field Study

EARNINGS

Entrepreneurship has improved the financial status of the respondents. They are habituated to maintain available relationships with the customers and the general public. It is also observed that the confident levels of the respondents are also improved after starting the units. All these factors have a cumulative effect on the regard and recognition of the role of the respondents in the family and also by the husband. They treat the respondents in a better manner with all respect, love and affection after starting the units. It is natural that the entrepreneurial activities will definitely elevate their image in the family also.

CONTROL OVER EARNINGS

Indian cultural ethos is to handover the earnings of the women to the male members of the family. They have no control over their earnings or properties since they always depend on the males under the dictum of MANU. But over the period since mid seventies situation has been changing and the desire for empowerment of women is picking up.

TABLE 2: RESPONDENTS' CONTROL OVER THEIR EARNINGS

Sl.No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	YES	227	80
2	NO	56	20
	Total	283	100

Source: Field Study

Education, economic activities and awareness in the lines of empowerment are encouraging women folk to assert themselves in the family and society. (Table-2) examines the extent to which the respondents have control over the earnings. The data helps to investigate the freedom of the women on dealing with their earnings. This freedom is a component of empowerment of the women. Nearly 80 per cent of the respondents state that they have control over their earnings. They can spend or save their earnings as desired by them. Though empowerment is perceptible, it is still open for improvement, because 20 per cent of respondents have no control over their earnings is not a small figure.

CHANGE IN CONSUMPTION PATTERN

It is usually hypothesized that Entrepreneurial activities increase incomes and increased incomes induce higher expenditure in consumption which leads to the improvement in the standards of living of the respondent households. For the purpose of identifying the improvement in the consumption levels, data levels data pertaining to before and after starting the enterprises is collected and presented in the table-3 Eight important consumption items are considered for analysis. Consumption quantities are taken in absolute terms for seven items to minimize the effect of variations in the prices for comparison. Prices of most of these goods have seasonal changes and hence comparison in absolute terms is made. However, consumption of cloth is taken in monetary terms as it is a manufacturing product and price changes are not seasonal in general.

TABLE 3: FAMILY CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Sl. No.	Item	Previous consumption (per month)	Previous average (per month)	present consumption (monthly)	Present average	Difference in average consumption
1	Milk (Lts)	3928 / 279	14	6330 / 283	22	8
2	Vegetables (Kgs)	3782 / 283	13	4878 / 283	17	4
3	Fruits (Dozens)	1802 / 159	11	3205 / 265	12	1
4	Oil (Kgs)	720 / 283	2.5	966 / 283	3.5	1
5	Pulses (Kgs)	637 / 283	2.2	876 / 283	3.0	0.8
6	Non-Veg (Kgs).	492 / 267	1.8	705 / 271	2.6	0.8
7	Eggs (Dozens)	7429 / 244	30	9771 / 253	38	8
8	Clothing (Rs.)	99900 / 283	353	129200 / 283	456	103

Source: Field Study

Absolute quantities of consumption per month have increased with regard to all commodities. Consumption of milk has increased by 8 litres, vegetables by 4Kgs., fruits by 1 dozen, Oil by 1 kg., pulses 0.8 Kg., Non-veg. items by 0.8 Kgs and eggs in 8 numbers. Most of the items add to the value of nutrition and health of the family members. When incomes increase higher standards of living are reflected in the form of increased levels of consumption. The monthly expenditure on clothing has also increased by Rs. 103/- per month.

EXPENDITURE ON HEALTH

Nearly 99 per cent of the respondents state that there is a positive change in the medical services available to them table-4.

TABLE 4: ACCESS TO MEDICAL SERVICES

Sl.No.	Feeling	No. of Respondents
1	Yes	280 (98.9)
2	No	03 (1.1)
3	N.A	-
	Total	283 (100)

It implies that the financial viabilities of the respondent households have enabled them to go in for qualitative medical services. Their paying capacity has increased and they are in a position to go for better medical services. Traditional methods, techniques, and village level services by the unqualified and untrained medical practitioners are slowly given good bye by the rural people because of the awareness and incomes. Media also play an important role in creating health consciousness among the respondents.

DECISION MAKING

Role of the women in decision making at home speaks of their status in the family. Decision making role of the women is a component of empowerment of the women. A woman should be part of a decision maker at home. Empowerment becomes meaningful when she is involved in the family decisions. To examine this aspect of empowerment, 7 indicators are considered in the study table-5. Responses are consolidated item-wise, to have an idea on the role of the women in decision making. With regard to children education, 77 per cent of the respondents state that they are consulted in decision taking. 65 per cent of them state that they are taking decisions on the girl child education.

TABLE 5: IMPROVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Sl.No.	Change in children education	No. of Respondents
1	Yes	260(91.9)
2	No	22 (7.8)
3	N.A	01(0.3)
	Total	283(100)

Source: Field Study

About 88 per cent respondent women are involved in the decision making on purchase of clothes, another 94 per cent of them take decisions on cooking. 66 per cent respondents take decisions on spending their money. About 66 per cent of respondents take decisions to visit their parents and relatives, only 35 per cent of the respondents are consulted and involved in the purchase of home appliances. The data clearly points out that, more than 65 per cent of the women entrepreneurs play active role in decision making at home. The data reveals that the days of male domination in decision making are slowly fading out and the assertion of women in decision making is getting more pronounced.

SHARING OF EARNINGS IN THE FAMILY

Sharing of the earnings in respondent families in the study area is examined and data presented in table-6. How the incomes rotate between wife and husband in the form of sharing is also observed. Nearly 79 per cent of the respondents indicate that they give their earnings to their husbands. Similarly 78 per cent state that their husbands handover their earnings to them. It is really interesting to note that both the partners have mutual confidence and work for the overall welfare of the families. Further, 73 per cent respondents state that they save a part of their earnings. Women entrepreneurs have dual roles to play both at home and enterprise. So there is a possibility at every stage for conflicts. The conflicts may be with husband, family members, neighbors, employees, customers

and others. The burden of looking after the enterprise and taking care of the home may some times make the women restless and tired. Business oriented problems sometime create tensions. However, only 20 per cent of respondent women say that they have conflicts due to the dual role. It can be said that a majority of women do not have any conflicts. This is an appreciable observation in the study, implying the adaptability and flexibility of the women in performing both roles effectively. Incomes are shared between the partners. Savings of the respondent women are also high and the conflicts due to dual roles are limited. All these point out that the women are slowly progressing in the right direction of empowerment in the study area.

TABLE 6: SHARING OF THE EARNINGS

Sl.No.	Item	YES	NO	NA	Total
1	Do you give your earnings to husbands	223 (79)	29 (10)	31 (11)	283 (100)
2	Does your husband give his earning to you	222 (78.4)	30 (10.6)	31 (11)	283 (100)
3	Do you save your earnings	206 (72.8)	77 (27.2)	-	283 (100)
4	Do you have any conflicts due to dual role performed by you	57 (20.0)	226 (80)	-	283 (100)

Source: Field Study

DECISION MAKING IN MANAGING THE UNIT

Generally the entrepreneurs will consult the officials, other entrepreneurs, Bankers and marketing agents for various reasons. A majority of (36 per cent) respondents consult their co- entrepreneurs while managing their units table-7. They are easily accessible and discussions can be in the local dialect with a familiar touch. The consultations with the co-entrepreneurs along with others goes a long way in making the respondent women more confident about their activities. The specialties of the co-entrepreneurs, their success stories and problem solving mechanisms attract the respondents more and more.

TABLE 7: WHOM DO YOU CONSULT WHILE MANAGING THE UNIT

Sl.No.	Item	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Discussions with officials	07	2.5
2	Discussions with other entrepreneurs	102	36.0
3	Discussions with Bankers	14	5.0
4	Discussions with Marketing Agents	2	0.8
5	N.A.	74	26.0
6	1, 2	8	2.8
7	1, 3	17	6.0
8	2, 3	58	20.5
9	1, 2, 4	1	0.4
	Total	283 (100)	100.0

Source: Field Study

There is a general belief that the women in the economic, political activities and social activities leave the decisions to the husband, even though they have the decision taking power. Several studies on Governance in Panchayat Raj Institutions have found that the women in responsible positions are made dummies by their husbands/family members. However, a radical change has started with the movement for empowerment of women in India. Data has been analysed from this angle to know the extent of decision making in matters relating to the economic activities of the respondent women.

As per the table-8, 20 per cent of respondents take decisions on their own. About 77 per cent of respondents state that entrepreneurial issues are decided by both of them jointly This type of joint decisions taken help analyze the issues in detail to take proper decisions. Both the wife and husband are to bear the consequences of business risks and so joint decision making is good. Nearly 23 per cent of respondent women are taking decisions on their own on the matters related to the economic activities. It can be inferred that to some extent the entrepreneurship has conferred empowerment to the respondent women.

TABLE 8: DECISIONS ABOUT THE MATTERS RELATING TO THE UNIT/BUSINESS

Sl.No.	Decisions	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Own	57	20.1
2	Husband	9	3.2
3	Jointly	217	76.7
	Total	283	100.0

Source: Field Study

TABLE 9: EMPOWERMENT AFTER JOINING SHG / STARTING THE UNIT – RESPONDENTS' OPINION

Sl.No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	281	99.3
2	No	2	0.7
	Total	283 (100)	100.0

Source: Field Study

MEMBERSHIP IN SHGs

Cognizable advantages and empowerment after starting the units by the respondents are examined in the table-9. SHG membership provides scope to start entrepreneurial activities and entrepreneurial activities help the cause of empowerment. Almost all the respondents revealed that they have derived different advantages by engaging economic activities. Empowerment or improvement in four vital areas is examined in table-10. The indicators viz., children education, girl child education, availability of nutritious food and healthy living in the form of cleanliness of the environment and personal cleanliness were considered to assess the level of empowerment.

TABLE 10: EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS – RESPONDENTS’ OPINION

Sl.No.	Opinion	No. of Respon-dents	Percentage
1	1. Children Education improved	5	1.8
2	2. Girl Children Education improved	2	0.7
3	3. Availability of nutritious food improved	7	2.5
4	4. Environment of surroundings and individual cleanliness improved.	9	3.2
5	1, 2	2	0.7
6	1, 3	12	4.2
7	1, 4	8	2.8
8	2, 3	3	1.1
9	2, 4	3	1.1
10	3, 4	79	27.9
11	1, 2, 3	6	2.1
12	1, 2, 4	1	0.4
13	1, 3, 4	49	17.3
14	2, 3, 4	10	3.5
15	1, 2, 3, 4	87	30.7
	Total	283 (100)	100.0

Source: Field Study

On the whole, it can be said that 83 per cent of the respondents either separately or in combination have an improvement both in the environmental and at personal cleanliness. About 61 per cent of respondents have felt that they had an improvement in children education and 40 per cent of them opined that they have an improvement in the education of girl children. Improvement in the availability of nutritious food is stated by 89 percent respondents.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Twelve aspects relating to both entrepreneurship and empowerment of sample women entrepreneurs are analysed to know the improvement whether these changes are the out come of women empowerment after starting the units.

About 98 per cent respondents state that there is an improvement in personal health and cleanliness table-11. A majority of respondents state (83 per cent) that they meet the Government officials without any inhibitions,77 per cent of them consult the non government organizations and officials without any hiccups. Another 87 per cent respondents opined that their banking habits have improved. Confidence of the lenders in extending loans is high in the opinion of 96 per cent of respondents. Status in the family has improved as stated by 80 per cent, 79 per cent respondents felt that their status in the group has improved, 76 per cent respondents felt that their status in the society has improved. Decision taking power has improved with regard to 62 per cent. About 83.0 per cent respondents state that their confidence levels are improved to a large extent. Only 62 per cent respondents state that their overall skills have improved. From the above analysis it can be said that there is a significant improvement in all aspects of empowerment. However, skill formation is the area where more concentration is needed.

TABLE 11: CHANGE IN EMPOWERMENT IN VARIOUS ASPECTS – OPINION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents		Total
		YES	NO	
1	1.Improvement in personal health and cleanliness	279 (98.5)	4 (1.5)	283 (100)
2	2.Ability to meet the Govt. Officials	234 (82.7)	49 (17.3)	283 (100)
3	3.Ability to meet Non-Govt. Officials	218 (77.0)	65 (23)	283 (100)
4	4.Improvement in Banking habits	246 (87)	37 (13)	283 (100)
5	5. High level of confidence of the lenders on repayment	273 (96.4)	10 (3.6)	283 (100)
6	6.Improvement in the position and status in the family	226 (79.8)	56 (19.7)	283 (100)
7	7.Betterment of status in the group	224 (79.1)	59 (20.9)	283 (100)
8	8.Discernible improvement in the social status	217 (76.6)	66 (23.4)	283 (100)
9	9. Increasing role in decision making in the family matters	198 (70.0)	85 (30.0)	283 (100)
10	10.Assertive role in decision making in the group	175 (61.8)	108 (38.2)	283 (100)
11	11.Higher levels of self confidence	235 (83.0)	48 (17.0)	283 (100)
12	12.Improvement in your overall skills	176 (62.1)	107 (37.9)	283 (100)

Source: Field Study

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Extent of political status and political awareness of the respondents are analyzed in the table-12.

TABLE 12: POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT – OPINION OF RESPONDENTS

Sl.No.	Opinion	YES	NO	Total
1	Are you a member of local body?	06 (2.1)	277 (97.9)	283 (100)
2	Do you take decisions on your own?	27 (9.5)	256 (90.5)	283 (100)
3	Do you take help in decision making from local political leaders?	10 (3.5)	273 (96.5)	283 (100)
4	Do you know that as per 73, 74 constitutional Amendment Reservation for women in local bodies is provided?	112 (39.6)	171 (60.4)	283 (100)
5	Do you regularly participate in Grama Sabha?	57 (20.1)	226 (79.9)	283 (100)
6	Do you raise issues / problems of village in Grama Sabha?	53 (18.7)	230 (81.3)	283 (100)
7	Do you feel that the women MPTCs and ZPTCs are able to take decisions on their own?	159 (56.2)	124 (43.8)	283 (100)
8	Do you feel that the member of SHG generally participates actively in local political / administrations than others?	260 (91.9)	23 (8.1)	283 (100)

Source: Field Study

Women members through organization, DWACRA groups and Mahila Mandals are educating the women even in local areas on political issues. They actively participate and cast votes in the elections at the Central, State and Local levels. Political awareness and status are also ingredients of the over all empowerment of the women. However, only 9.5 per cent state that they take decisions on political issues on their own. It implies that decision making to a large extent is influenced by local leaders, husband, family members, relatives and friends. Independent decision taking needs a lot of groundwork including education. Ignorance is the basic reason for the women to depend on others in political matters. This is the general frame work in India, especially in the rural areas, in which Indian democracy thrives. Political parties encash this weakness to their advantage by encouraging mob psychology. Education, awareness and responsible media can improve situation and ignite the spirit of independence in political issues.

CONCLUSION

A majority of women entrepreneurs in the state that their status both in the family and society has improved after starting the entrepreneurial activities. They feel that husbands and their family members treat them better with all love, affection and respect. A majority of the respondent women state that they have control over their earnings. Thus, it can be inferred that economic activities increase the women entrepreneurs' incomes and consumption levels. Most of the women entrepreneurs state that they are now looking after their health and there is a progressive change in the education of children. The word of the respondent women at home is given respect and regard and they are involved in decision making at home. The respondents have the potentiality to save a part of their income. While managing the units, respondent women mostly consult other co-entrepreneurs and bankers. A majority of the respondents expressed that there is an improvement in personal health and cleanliness, consultation with officials, banking habits, status of the family in the society and decision making ability. Out of total income. The percentage share of expenditure on children education and personal health has been increased. It implies that health consciousness and the urge for quality education to their children are increasing in the study area. The study found an improvement in political empowerment of sample women entrepreneurs who are members of SHGs. Most of the women felt that arranging adult education programmes for women, registering property in the name of the women, equal opportunities with men, abolition of dowry, prohibition of liquor, creation of social awareness are some of the important aspects that would definitely improve the conditions of women. On the whole, from the foregoing analysis it can be concluded that positive relationship between women entrepreneurship and women empowerment is found to be significant.

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APPENDIX

TABLE-1: ECONOMICS ACTIVITY OF WOMEN RESPONDENTS

Economics activity	No of respondents	Percentage
Mini dairy	154	54.4
Business	74	26.1
Tailoring	25	8.8
Veg-Fruits & Fish vending	6	2.1
Running small hotel	3	2.9
Pickles making	5	0.4
Horticulture	2	0.7
Flour mill	3	1.0
Leaf plate making	1	0.4
Rearing pigs & Goats	3	1.4
Ironing & painting	5	1.8
	283	100.00

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