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PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO DALITS

DR. ANNAPOORANI
PROFESSOR
AVINASHILINGAM UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN
COIMBATORE

P.DEVI BHUVANESHWARI
RESEARCH SCHOLAR
AVINASHILINGAM UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN
COIMBATORE

ABSTRACT

A woman entrepreneur is an adult who owns and runs an enterprise, especially a commercial one, often at personal financial risk. In India women have made a comparatively late entry into business scenario mainly due to the orthodox and traditional socio-cultural environment. In India from the very beginning, women have been managers of the kitchen and have solely dominated the area of household activities. Today non – traditional enterprises are easily managed by women and are done so excellently with them as the decision – makers. Today, woman entrepreneurs represent a group of women who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation. Among the reasons for women to run organized enterprises are their skill and knowledge, their talents and abilities in business and a compelling desire of wanting to do something positive. In this content a research study was formulated with the objectives of identifying the socio economic profile of Dalit women entrepreneurs, to highlight the main motivational factors for Dalit women entrepreneurs and to study the major constraints faced by the Dalit women entrepreneurs. The study was related to 50 dalit women entrepreneurs in Tirupur district of Tamil Nadu. The required information relating to general background, motivational factors and problems faced by them were collected by administering an interview schedule to the respondents. The study used chi square analysis to find out whether there is significant association between education and the type of entrepreneurial activity and type of family and profit earned. The study revealed that dalit women were involved in tailoring, phenyl making, poultry and running grocery shops. The major motivational factors were earning money and need for self dependence. However they found the problem in getting finance and dominance of males.

KEYWORDS

Dalit, Domination, Entrepreneur, Motivation, Problems.

INTRODUCTION

A woman entrepreneur is an adult who owns and runs an enterprise, especially a commercial one, often at personal financial risk. A recent ILO-Indian study of women entrepreneurs gave the definition of women's enterprise as "a small unit where one or more women entrepreneurs have not less than 50 per cent financial holdings". In India women have made a comparatively late entry into business scenario mainly due to the orthodox and traditional socio-cultural environment. In India from the very beginning, women have been managers of the kitchen and have solely dominated the area of household activities. So deep has been the impact of this, that the general attitude of the people about women entrepreneurs is that they are makers of pickles, papads, masalas, and other household goods. Today nontraditional enterprises are easily managed by women and are done so excellently with them as the decision makers. Today, woman entrepreneurs represent a group of women who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation. Among the reasons for women to run organized enterprises are their skill and knowledge, their talents and abilities in business and a compelling desire of wanting to do something positive.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

It is imperative to note the participation of women in economic activities as self-employed individuals. Many of the traditional occupations open to women were mainly based on caste, creed and the nature of self-employment based on the standard of living. Presently, women are generating employment for themselves in an unorganized sector and another category of women who provide employment for others. The economic status of the women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development and therefore it becomes imperative for the Government to frame policies for development of entrepreneurship among women. The concept of developing women entrepreneurship lays emphasis of the productive utilization of women labour force to generate income and output. The programme for developing women entrepreneur would make a dent to alleviate poverty.

DEVELOPMENT OF DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The dalit women entrepreneurs are mostly the ones who set up small enterprises to sustain themselves and their families. Although, becoming an entrepreneur did arouse a little dilemma in many dalit women, to earn quick money was the basic reason for dalit women to start entrepreneurship. They have a deep-seated need for a sense of independence along with a desire to do something meaningful with their time and to have their own identity instead of remaining closeted behind their husband's nameplate. The major factors influencing dalit women entrepreneurs are economic independence, establishing their identity, achievement of excellence, building confidence, developing risk-taking ability, motivation, equal status in society and greater freedom and mobility. Setting up an enterprise is not an easy job for women entrepreneurs in Tirupur. At the same time running the enterprise is a greater task. A challenge is always there for these women entrepreneurs to run their enterprise successfully, earning profit and ensuring the growth of the enterprises which will severely test their entrepreneurial skill and survival of the unit. Despite various odds against them, several women have started to run their own enterprise.

In India, researchers like Kiran Rai and Monica Srivastava (2011), Patil (2011), Bhaskara Bagchi and Gangotree ghosh (2011) have analyzed the motives and problems of women entrepreneurs. But there had been limited study relating to the prospects and challenges of dalit women entrepreneurs. As such, the current study on "Prospects and Challenges of Women Entrepreneurship with specific reference to Dalits" was formulated with the following objectives:

1. To identify the socio economic profile of Dalit women entrepreneurs,
2. To highlight the main motivational factors for Dalit women entrepreneurs and
3. To study the major constraints faced by the Dalit women entrepreneurs.

METHODOLOGY

The study was related to Tirupur district of Tamil Nadu due to easy accessibility. Tirupur is a textile hub and a vast generator of employment for unskilled temporary workers. Tirupur is the "knitwear capital" of India. It has spurred up the textile industry in India for the past three decades. Its economic boom boosts the morale of Indian industrialists. It contributes to a huge amount of foreign exchange in India. Tirupur has the largest and fastest growing urban agglomerations in Tamil Nadu. The knitwear industry which is the soul of Tirupur has created millions of jobs for all class of people. There are nearly about 3000

sewing units, 1326 knitting units and 730 dyeing units and. Tirupur consists of 13 blocks namely Uthukuli, Gudimangalam, Vellakovil, Madathukulam, Kundadam, Mulanur, Udumalpet, Avinashi, Palladam, Pongalur, Tirupur, Kangayam and Dharmapuri. The study was confined to Nallur Corporation of Tirupur block. In this area, there were 65 dalit women entrepreneurs involved in petty shop, grocery, and garment stitching and tailoring.

From these entrepreneurs, 50 were selected for the study based on their co-operation and willingness to respond. The required information relating to general background, motivational factors and problems faced by them were collected by administering an interview schedule to the respondents.

HYPOTHESIS FRAMED

- (i) There is no significant association between education and the type of entrepreneurial activity of dalit women and
(ii) There is no significant association between the type of family and profit earned by dalit women entrepreneurs.

TOOLS USED

CHI SQUARED TEST

The study used chi square analysis to find out whether there is significant association between education and the type of entrepreneurial activity and type of family and profit earned. The formula used was

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(\text{observed} - \text{expected})^2}{\text{expected}}$$

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Table I represents the general information of the respondents.

TABLE I: GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

a	Age	Number	Percentage
	25 – 35	15	30
	35 – 45	15	30
	45 – 55	12	24
	Above 55	8	16
b	Educational Level		
	Illiterate	17	34
	Primary	22	44
	Secondary	11	22
	Collegiate		
c	Monthly Family Income(in rupees)		
	Below 3000	15	30
	3000 – 5000	25	50
	5000 – 10000	10	20
d	Type of family		
	Joint	18	36
	Nuclear	32	64
e	Size of family		
	Small	20	40
	Medium	24	48
	Large	6	12
f	Caste		
	Harijans	34	68
	Pallars	10	20
	Parayars	6	12

Source: Survey Analysis

From Table I, it is evident that majority of the respondents (60 percent) were in the age group of 25 – 45 years. Only 16 percent were in the age group of above 55. Besides their entrepreneurial skills, for most of them, acquiring education has remained a significant facilitating factor. In the selected area 34 percent of the respondents were illiterates. 44 percent have obtained primary education and 22 percent of the respondents have obtained secondary level education. Fifty percent of the respondents were getting their monthly family income as Rs. 3000-5000.

In the selected area, 36 percent of the respondents were belonging to joint family and 64 percent were belonging to nuclear family. Majority of the respondents (48 percent) have medium size of family having only two children. Sixty eight percent of the respondents were Harijans, 20 percent were Pallars and 12 percent of the respondents were Parayars.

B. ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES OF DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:

Table II represents the entrepreneurial activities undertaken by dalit women entrepreneurs

TABLE II: ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Activities	Number of entrepreneurs	Percentage
Tailoring	25	50
Running grocery shops	8	16
Poultry	12	24
Phenyl making	5	10

Source: Survey analysis

In most of the cases, women entrepreneurs usually pursue economic activities which are linked to their household activities and in some cases indistinguishable. From Table II it has been evident that tailoring (50 percent) is the most popular activity amongst women entrepreneurs followed by poultry (24 percent). The traditional occupations of these people were sweeping/ scavenging. These people, by abandoning their traditional menial jobs, have taken to entrepreneurial activities, which require innovations, use of technology, leadership quality, decision-making ability and, by doing so, they have come out of the stigmatized social life which earlier had restricted their mobility. The calculation of chi squared indicated that there was no association between education and entrepreneurial activities undertaken by dalit women entrepreneurs, since the calculated $\chi^2_{0.05}$ was 2.96 and it was less than $\chi^2_{0.05} = 3.84$

C. MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The present study tries to find out the motivational factors of dalit women entrepreneurs. Table III brings out the motivational factors of dalit women entrepreneurs.

TABLE III: MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Source	Number of entrepreneurs	Percentage
Earning money	21	42
Economic survival	9	18
Self-realization/Awakening	5	10
Desire to be independent	5	10
Hereditary occupation	7	14
Govt policy/initiatives	3	6

Source: Survey analysis

It can be noted from Table III that earning money was one of the main reason for starting an enterprise. On the whole, profit making, economic survival, self realization and freedom were the main reasons for starting an enterprise.

D. PROFIT EARNED BY DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Table IV brings out the profit earned by Dalit women entrepreneurs.

TABLE IV: PROFIT EARNED BY DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Profit Earned	Number of entrepreneurs	Percentage
Below 3000	12	24
3000 – 5000	22	44
Above 5000	16	32

Source: Survey analysis

Majority of the respondents (44 percent) have earned a profit of Rs.3000-5000 per month and 32 percent of the respondents earned a profit of above Rs.5000 per month. The application of chi square indicated that there was no association between the type of family and profit earned by dalit women entrepreneurs, since the calculated χ^2 was 2.05 and it is less than $\chi^2 = 3.84$

E. PROBLEMS FACED BY DALIT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:

The major problems encountered by women entrepreneurs are financial problems, getting support from family members and social constraints. Table V represents the constraints faced by dalit women entrepreneurs.

TABLE V: CONSTRAINTS FACED BY DALIT WOMEN NETREPRENEURS

Constraints	Number of entrepreneurs	Percentage
Dual role of women	35	70
Male domination	38	76
Lack of economic freedom	23	46
Lack of exposure	21	42
Lack of self confidence	37	74
Absence of family encouragement	29	58
Lack of knowledge of finance	24	48
Not having own money	35	70
Tight repayment schedule	26	52

Source: Survey analysis

From Table V it can be noted that the main constraint faced by the dalit women entrepreneurs was male domination (76 percent), dual role of women (70 percent), lack of self confidence (74 percent) and not having own money (70 percent). Dalit women entrepreneur in Tirupur not only struggle at the time of establishment of enterprises but at operation stage also, they have lots to overcome with different functional difficulties. Usually women faced two fold operational problems. One she has to overcome with problems of production process like, scarcity of raw material, lack of technical skills, lack of utilities and infrastructure facility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For proper development of Dalit women enterprises in Tirupur there is need to evolve many strategies to suit various conditions in different communities and regions. Suggestive measures to solve the problems confronted by them and for running their enterprise smoothly are:

1. Provision of proper technical education to Dalit women;
2. Improvement of identification mechanism of new enterprise;
3. Assistance in project formulation;
4. Creating awareness of various credit facilities, financial incentive and subsidies;
5. Adequate follow-up and support to the women enterprises;
6. Women enterprises research and application from time to time have to be documented;
7. Entrepreneurship Development Programmes should be tailored to varying requirements of Dalit women entrepreneurs and
8. Efforts should be made by the Government to provide access to information.

From these suggestions it is quite visible that for development and promotion of women entrepreneurship, in the region, there is a need for multi dimensional approach from different sector, namely from the Government side, financial institutions, individual women entrepreneurs and many more, for a flexible integrated and coordinated specific approach.

CONCLUSION

The principal factor in developing entrepreneurship among women is not in terms of infrastructure or financial assistance or identifying an enterprise but it is a question of clearing the ground for their movement into entrepreneurship. For ages together they have been confined to a secondary role and confined to the homes though there are several factors contributing to the emergence of women as entrepreneurs. The sustained and coordinated effort from all dimensions would pave the way for the women moving into entrepreneurial activity thus contributing to the social and economic development of the members of the family and thereby gaining equality and equal importance for themselves.

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