

DYNAMIC CONSTRAINTS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Dr.K.Sounthara Priya,

Assistant Professor of Commerce,
The Standard Fireworks Rajaratnam College for Women, Sivakasi

INTRODUCTION

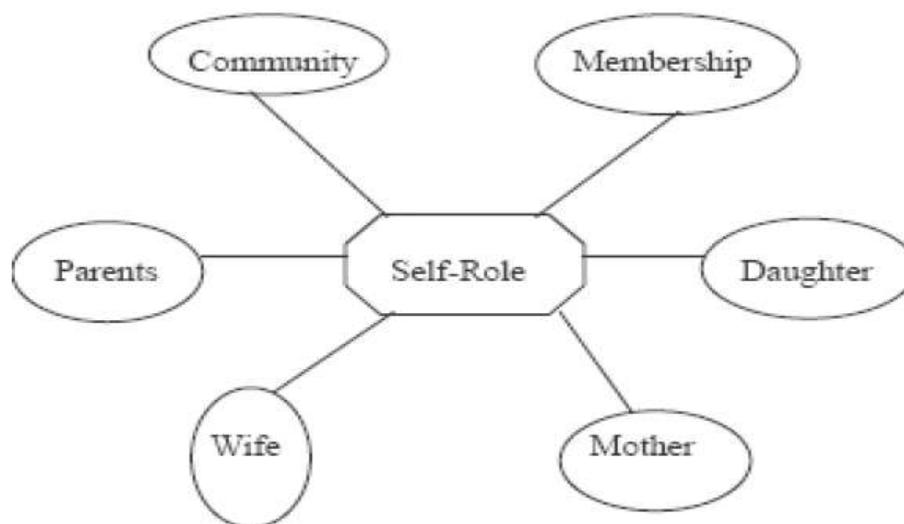
A large number of women are entering into entrepreneurship in some form or the other. The drive to pursue entrepreneurship is due to the immense passion and certain compulsions. Entrepreneurs play an important role in the economic development of a nation. Women's skills, knowledge, talents, abilities and desire of to do something for themselves and their children or family are some of the reasons for the women to become entrepreneurs. According to World Bank, investing more in women enterprises rather in men reduces the inequalities and poverty and thereafter ensures the economic development of a nation. The Government has also offered a variety of programmes for women entrepreneurs in the recent past.

But, the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs are growing rapidly. In India, although women constitute the majority of the total population, but the entrepreneurial world still seems a male dominated one, which exposes women entrepreneurs to often face some major constraints in running their enterprise successfully. Many women entrepreneurs are either housewives or illiterates or a fresh graduate with no previous experience of running a business enterprise. With changing time in globalized and competitive era, women entrepreneurs are now confronted with many barriers which have often prevented them to develop their enterprises. The problems and constraints experienced by women enterprise have thus resulted in restricting and inhibited the expansion of women entrepreneurship.

Objectives of the study

1. To know the key changes in women entrepreneurs in last five decades
2. To analyse the constraints in Starting and running the enterprise
3. To offer valued suggestions for solving the problems of women entrepreneurs.

Women And Social-Role Interface



Role of women entrepreneurs

Changes in women entrepreneurs in last five decades

The beginning period marked the existence of women in the business related home made products like pickles, powder and papads. But later the focus was shifted towards the entrepreneurial activities related to the small and medium enterprises related to the manufacturing, trading and service sector.

Table 1 shows the Changes in women entrepreneurs in last five decades

Table 1**Changes in women entrepreneurs in last five decades**

Fifties	Compulsive factors led to the creation of women entrepreneurs.
sixties	Women began to aspire but also accepted the social cultural traditions.
seventies	The women in this decade opened up new frontier. They had not only aspiration but ambition.
eighties	Women were educated in highly sophisticated , technological and professional education. They became equally contributing partners.
nineties	This was the first time when the concept was best rather than male heir was talked about
21st century	“ Jill of all trades”

Last five decades have been phenomenal changes in the status and workplace of women in India in sixties women took steps to start small enterprises at home and from home for self occupation and engagement. The women in seventies opened up new frontiers and developed not only aspirations but ambitions for self employment and employment generation. In eighties the number of women pursuing highly sophisticated technological and professional education increased. They entered into the family business as equally contributing partners. The women of the nineties were capable, competent and confident. They were clear of their goal, processes and dynamics of goal accomplishment. In most cases, they move out and outperformed their male counter parts. 21st century the women expertise in all field. Many of the industries are headed and guided by women as pioneers and maverick. They have ventured to build enterprises to discover their relevance and meaning of life in themselves.

Constraints in the path of women entrepreneurs

Highly educated, talented and professionally qualified women should be encouraged for running their own business, rather than reliant on salaried job. A desirable atmosphere is necessary for every women to inculcate entrepreneurial values and involve greatly in business dealings. But women entrepreneurs have to face the constraints under two heads-

A. Constraints in Starting an Enterprise.**B. Constraints in Running an Enterprise****A. CONSTRAINTS IN STARTING AN ENTERPRISE:**

Women entrepreneurs hailed from different backgrounds and family set-ups, but still the problems which they faced were not very different from each other. The various barriers and obstacles which these women entrepreneurs faced while initiating their enterprises are listed below:

1. Raising the Funds:

One of the important constraints faced by the women entrepreneurs was of **raising the funds** for the initiation of their venture. They have to arrange for funds to start the business by borrowing or taking loan. The savings which they have is often insufficient to start the venture. This way they start raising their dependency on private moneylenders. Education played an important role in making the females aware of the facilities provided by the banks and the government for their benefit. The Banks and the financial institutions are active for providing loans to the women entrepreneurs. But the women entrepreneurs are either ignorant or hesitant to approach them.

2. Lack of Entrepreneurial skills:

Women have lacked the entrepreneurial skills relating to administration, marketing, accounts and public relations. Females were not exposed to activities where they could have gained confidence and become aware of the surroundings. More or less they were pushed into the entrepreneurial work due to circumstantial needs. Due to lack of education, the women entrepreneur face big hindrance in their capabilities of starting their enterprises. This in fact calls for bridging the gap by virtue of imparting suitable training programs which inducts learning among them with their comfort level.

3. Combining work with Family, Insecurity & Lack of Self-confidence:

An important constraint which was faced by the women entrepreneurs was insecurity & lack of self-confidence that they will be able to do justice to their venture and at the same time manage the family also with equal sincerity and dedication. The majority of women entrepreneurs have faced problems relating to insecurity & lack of self-confidence. This insecurity was also because of insufficient support from the family and gender issues which they faced at many places. Females were responsible for all the household work irrespective of the fact that they were into business.

4.Lack of Family Support:

Confidence to step out of the four walls of the house is an important aspect which the women entrepreneur needs to possess. Her confidence level makes her to start the business venture. A constant fear of failure in doing justice to their venture and at the same time managing the family with equal sincerity and dedication often puts tremendous pressure on women entrepreneurs thus affecting their efficiency and zeal to perform. The family support was an important reason for many females to avoid stepping into the entrepreneurial venture.

5.Gender Biasness

Gender biasness has always been a big obstacle in the path of the female entrepreneurship. There has been biasness in our society from years infinite relating to the issues concerned with females. The women entrepreneurs till date are a victim to *Gender biasness*. It may be the case of education, rights, property, business or any other issue. The females are always ignored by the male dominating society. People who have daughters do not prefer to include her in the family business thinking .

6.Non Acceptance

If a lady in a family moves out to do some business or any activity to support her family, this often becomes a prestige issue among few castes in our country. Thus initiating a business enterprise by a woman is a big challenge even in this twenty first century. This biasness in the thought process is a big obstacle in her growth as a successful entrepreneur.

7.Lack of Awareness and Adequate Knowledge:

Lack of awareness and adequate knowledge of the work or the related activities is another constraints which is often faced by the women entrepreneurs in smooth functioning of various activities in their venture. The proportion of such women entrepreneurs accounts to around 22 per cent. They need to upgrade themselves from time to time by attending training programs or workshops to enhance their knowledge. Some women enter into the business with the help of a friend or a family member but they themselves possess little knowledge of the work done. Many women entrepreneurs who in fact had a very meager idea about the enterprise before initiating it. This is one of the reason that lack of knowledge about business operations often creates hurdles for them while running their enterprises later on and they are not able to cope up with the day to day activities. Therefore, it becomes important for them to have sufficient knowledge of the work which they are doing.

8.Finding Right Contacts for Support:

Finding the right contact was another important issue which was an important constraint for the female entrepreneurs. The female entrepreneurs were unaware of the contact persons who could help them in expanding their work. The women entrepreneurs were exposed to the NGOs, business houses and other organizations which were available to guide and help these women with their ventures.

9.Lack of Proper Advice and Guidance:

The females often felt reluctant or hesitant to approach people for further direction and guidance. At times, they were also unaware about whom to approach to seek right guidance. There are government institutions who are ready to provide entrepreneurial guidance. These females were not aware and at times were not confident of approaching them.

10.Lack of Computer Literacy:

Computer literacy was also one of the important constraints which were faced by the women entrepreneurs which they said could have helped them in smooth functioning of various activities in their venture. But they are not receive any technical training or education to handle the computer comfortably.

B. CONSTRAINTS IN RUNNING AN ENTERPRISE:

A number of constraints arise before the women entrepreneur when she steps in the competitive world. Facing them bravely and then starting her own business is commendable on her part. As the business proceeds, she comes across several other obstacles which slower her process of work and often demoralize her .There is a difference in the constraints and the problems which they face before entering into a venture and the problems which they face later.

A different set of problems await them once they are running a venture. Thus the challenges ahead of a woman entrepreneur in running and growing her business enterprises are very distinct and difficult, in order to make a stand for herself in the business world. The following are some of the constraints which the females face while running a venture.

1. Inadequate Finance and Working Capital:

The most important problem which any woman entrepreneur faces is the arrangement of **adequate finance**. Around 59% of women entrepreneurs have struggled to arrange adequate finance to run their enterprises. The scarcity of working capital is noticed major constraints faced by the women entrepreneurs. Females are able to start a venture after arranging the finances, the problem is not over. They often have to face shortage of liquidity in their finances to cover the operational costs. The women are not aware of the option of taking a loan from the Banks or other financial institutions. They often fail to make arrangement of liquid money. It leads to delays the progress of their enterprises.

2.Lack of Administrative Skills:

Managing the household is much different from administering the business activities. The women entrepreneurs face many problems in managing the day to day activities in the business place. They often come across difficult employees and customers too. Handling the employees and getting the work done from them to the maximum is not easy when these ladies have male employees working under them. These women entrepreneurs are able to handle the tantrums of their difficult employees with experience and patience. In the initial years of the business, it becomes important for them to establish their venture and earn a name in the market. This requires timely delivery of work with quality. Here, the administrative skills of the females are lack to run their enterprise.

3. Work-life Balance and Time Management:

Work-life balance and Time management is of utmost importance for the females who have to balance between their family and the work place. A woman entrepreneur has to take care of her responsibilities as a mother, wife and daughter-in-law also. At the same time she is the Boss at her work place. There are several occasions where her physical presence is required at both the places. It becomes difficult for her to prioritize between the situations. In most of the cases the responsibilities towards the family are chosen and the work is affected. If she delays any particular activity, the whole schedule of the day is disturbed which in turn affects her performance in the business. She often utilizes her time on holidays and her visits to the market become multipurpose. When the time is not managed, it affects her work which requires supervision or personal care. This happens with almost all the women entrepreneurs who are staying in a nuclear family or are a single parent. The children have always been their responsibility which they have to take care even if they are at work or are sick. The growing responsibility of the family, children and at times in-laws is to be handled simultaneously with the rising demand of the work place. Thus running an enterprise by a woman under the circumstances often becomes a very challenging job. As the enterprise grows, it requires more time, money, efforts in order to position itself better in the market. The women have to manage both the places so that they can benefit in their work.

4. Mental & Physical Stress:

Physical stress in managing and coordinating with the day to day activities often lowers the output and quality of these females. They not only face physical stress but also go through mental pressure to maintain a balance in work and family life. As the venture expands or is trying to position itself in the market, both mental and physical stress increases. This at times makes the females feel low and the work starts to suffer. Women entrepreneurs have to play multiple roles as of an entrepreneur, a mother, a daughter, a wife, a cook, etc. To play all these roles efficiently, they experience a lot of strain and often undergo mental stress and physical trauma.

5. Health

Health is such a thing which can affect the working of any person, be it a male or a female. The women entrepreneurs who need to take care of dual responsibilities of their business and the household are often affected with ill health. Their health is very important for their business as well as the household. A woman when sick is not able to do justice to her business and is often irritated for petty things. The business suffers and so does the house. The entrepreneurial activities which require them to be always on the move often result in fatigue and stress.

6. Tough Competition:

This competition can be related to product/service price, availability, packaging, marketing tactics or upgraded technology. The females who have just started the venture and their production are not on a large scale, they are unable to compete on the price front. **Cut-throat competition** with other group of men and established self-sufficient entrepreneurs is another problem faced by women entrepreneurs. They do not have a proper organizational set-up to pump in a lot of money for canvassing and advertisements. Thus they have to face a stiff competition with the men entrepreneurs who easily involve in the promotion and development area and carry out easy marketing of their products with both the organized sector and their male counterparts. Such a competition ultimately results in the insolvency of women entrepreneurs. This competition faced is related to advertisement, price, packing, quality or brand. The competitor may also be into mass production and thus enjoys economies to scale. This leads to low cost of production and thus lower price.

7. Travelling and Mobility Problems:

Incapability to move becomes a hindrance for the females whether it is related to transport or accessibility of the market. They are often dependent on paid transport or their spouse to move around for the various deals of their business. Such kind of obstacles often hinders the smooth working of the entrepreneurial venture.

8. Marketing Constraints:

Women entrepreneurs are definitely going to face marketing problems. The delivery of the product to the customers, the meetings with the clients etc. all will be not easy. Another side of the marketing problem of the women entrepreneurs is the lack of knowledge of strategies which could ease to market the product. Exploring new places and venues for sale of their product was a difficult task for the women entrepreneurs. They were confined to their own outlet and did not have much idea or time to look for better places which may be profitable.

9. Lack of Expertise & Decision Making:

Any business enterprise, how big or small it may be, its success and growth depends on timely and appropriate decision making process involved in running it. Most of the women entrepreneurs lack insight and therefore are not able to take appropriate and timely business decisions. Lack of training programs and professional education becomes a hindrance for them to be strategic in their decision making power and thus the business often suffers.

10. Lack of Awareness about Government Schemes and their Rights:

The Government has introduced several schemes for the women entrepreneurs but Lack of awareness has served as a hindrance in availing benefits from all such schemes. Lack of awareness about their rights and the facilities & benefits available for them, are few of the important obstacles which these women entrepreneurs need to overcome as soon as possible. Realizing their strengths and making use of it is the biggest challenge which the women entrepreneurs need to face.

11. Fear of Failure:

There is a tremendous pressure as these women entrepreneurs enter into entrepreneurship against all odds. The survival against all internal as well as external pressures becomes a very difficult proposition and often develops a fear of failure among such women entrepreneurs.

Suggestions

Women entrepreneurs also explored their perceptions of the types of support that might be most helpful for them in addressing the issues and problems that they are facing.

Childcare: More childcare facilities should be provided to fit women entrepreneurs' needs. This would entail extended opening hours or flexible opening hours according to the woman entrepreneur's needs. Alternatively measures should be taken for fathers to be in the position to take parental leave, and men should be encouraged to take the leave.

Working time: Self-employed women should be encouraged to employ on a part-time or full-time basis at least one person so that they have more time for their family and can take interest in other occupations, actively participate in decision-making bodies.

Training, advice or consultancy targeted solely or mainly at women entrepreneurs

Start up programmes for women, particularly those returning to the labour market.

Special targeting of women in general campaigns to boost levels of entrepreneurship.

Equal opportunities policies aiming for equal access for women to services.

Need to have network with other firms to generate business and access informal advice.

Encouraging and assisting relevant business support initiatives

Wild Women Entrepreneurs (Wild WE), the leading networking organization for women entrepreneurs, announced today that the organization has entered into a partnership with Ready Talk to help area women enhance their professional development without restrictions.. It is also found that compared to men, women were less concerned with making money and often choose business proprietorship as a result of career dissatisfaction. Secondly, women find entrepreneurship as a tool of meeting their career needs and childcare role.

CONCLUSION

The problems while initiating the venture and the problems while running a business. The women entrepreneurs of both the areas faced the constraints of similar nature. The percentage was definitely different but the nature of the problem was more or less the same. The basic and foremost requirement of starting a venture is the raising of funds. This has been the biggest hindrance for the women to start their venture. Low confidence level and poor communication skills are some of the aspects which need to be improved and polished in the women entrepreneurs. The women were fortunate to enjoy family support as they basically hailed from joint and large families.

The women entrepreneurs faced the issue of expertise and decision making. They were not exposed to any kind of technical training program, neither were aware of the government schemes which would have helped them in their venture. It is important to create awareness amongst the women about the training programs run by the government. They also need to be guided and advised at regular intervals for the smooth functioning of their enterprise.

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