



Income Generating Activities Adopted and Constraints Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Punjab

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ABSTRACT

In a developing country like India, entrepreneurship can provide new impetus to job creation and economic development. Small scale business activities adopted by women entrepreneurs can contribute to rural development. It will also provide economic security and empower rural women as an individual. In present study, an attempt was made to study entrepreneurial activities adopted by women entrepreneurs in rural Punjab, benefits realized and constraints faced by them. For this purpose, four districts of Punjab were purposively selected *i.e.*, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Patiala. The data were collected using pre-tested questionnaire from 60 randomly selected women entrepreneurs. The results of the study revealed that women entrepreneurs had adopted various income generating activities *viz.*, pickle making (30%), football sewing (15.0%) and *phukari* making (21.7%). Rise in income was realized benefit by 18.3% of the women entrepreneurs. Various constraints faced by rural women entrepreneurs were lack of credit facilities (25%), male dominance (13%), tough competition (11%), limited physical mobility (9%), low risk-bearing ability (5%), lack of marketing know-how (05%), lack of technical skills (04%), low self-esteem (3%) and limited access to technology (3%), etc. It was concluded that entrepreneurship development programme should focus on identified constraints faced by rural women entrepreneurs which would boost entrepreneurial activities and rural development in near future.

Key Words: Entrepreneurial activities, skill and constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Growth and development of rural economy is an essential pre-condition for the development of the nation as a whole. Entrepreneurship development in rural areas is increasingly recognized as an important driver of job creation and economic growth and considered as a key aspect of economic dynamism (Karimi, 2015). It is considered that, self-employment in small scale businesses by promoting women entrepreneurship will contribute to socio-economic development in developing countries (Jamali, 2009; Ani and Rayen, 2014). Entrepreneurship development among rural women provides economic security, power for self-expression and empowers them as an individual (Itani *et al.*, 2011; Eddleston and Powell, 2008). Many

women entrepreneur have broken away from the routine tasks and are exploring innovative avenues for their socio-economic empowerment. The women opting for entrepreneurship in rural areas have provided them needed independence. They have proved to have the required talent, skills, creativity and a strong motivation for achievement. At the same time, women are also shattering the gender based stereotypes. Adoption of entrepreneurial activities has given a route of escape for women who were enslaved by the patriarchal values and were restrained by household chores. The rate of increase of women entrepreneurship, especially in developing countries, has created a positive impact on overall household welfare and consumption (Minniti and Naudé, 2010).

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of women entrepreneurs in rural Punjab.

Sr. No.	Socio-economic characteristics	Category	f*
1.	Age	Young (<25 yr)	4 (6.7)**
		Middle (25-50 Yr)	49 (81.6)
		Old (>50 yr)	7 (11.7)
2.	Educational status	Illiterate	0.0
		Middle	2 (3.3)
		Matriculation	18 (30.0)
		10+2	39 (65.0)
		Graduate	1 (1.7)
3.	Caste	General	26 (43.3)
		Backward class	19 (31.7)
		Schedule caste	15 (25.0)
4.	Family type	Joint	21 (35.0)
		Nuclear	39 (65.0)
5.	Marital status	Married	52 (86.7)
		Un- married	8(13.3)
6.	Income per month	<5000	22 (39.3)
		5000-10000	32 (53.7)
		>10000	6 (10.0)

* Frequency **Figures in parenthesis are the percentages

Although, worldwide the number of women entrepreneurs has increased but their number is considerably less than that of their male entrepreneurs (Verheul *et al*, 2006). Women entrepreneurship development is especially challenging in developing countries like India. Maintaining balancing between work and family life, handling patriarchal societies and gender discrimination are some of the exclusive challenges faced by women. Further, women face challenges due to lack of opportunities and resource-constraints (Panda and Dash, 2014, 2016; Verheul *et al*, 2006). Keeping above in view, the present study was conducted to know the different enterprises initiated by women entrepreneurs, benefits realized and constraint faced by them in starting new venture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted during the year 2020 in Punjab state. For data collection, a total of four districts *viz.*, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Patiala having maximum number of women entrepreneurs were purposively selected. Further from each selected district three villages and thus total 12 villages were selected following the same criterion. Further, from each village a sample of five women entrepreneurs were randomly taken, thus constituting total sample size of 60 women entrepreneurs. The data regarding entrepreneurial activities adopted by rural women, benefits realized and constraints faced by them were collected using pre-tested questionnaire. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentages to prioritize the realized benefits and constraints.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the age of the respondents revealed that most (81.6%) of the respondents are in the age group of 25 to 50 yr, followed by old (11.7%) and young (6.7) (Table 1).

This implies that the women in middle age group are more likely to adopt new enterprises. Majority of the women entrepreneurs belonged to general caste category (~43%) followed by other backward castes (~32%) and while one fourth (25%) belonged schedule caste category This showed that women from all sections of the society were keen to enhance their income by setting up new enterprises. Regarding family type, ~65% families were from nuclear families while 35% from joint families.

As far as their educational qualification was concerned, majority (65%) of the entrepreneurial women were having education up to 10+2, followed by matriculation, middle (~3%) and graduation (~2%). Likewise, ~87% were married while remaining ~13% were um-married. The majority of the respondents (53.7%) had monthly income between Rs 5,000-. 10,000/- only.

Income generating activities adopted by women entrepreneurs

The data (Table 2) revealed that women entrepreneurs were mainly engaged (30%) in pickle making along with juice, squash or jelly preparation. These women entrepreneurs working in self help groups (SHGs) were employed primarily in Hoshiarpur, Kandi region of Punjab. Furthermore, ~22% women entrepreneurs were engaged in embroidery. Embroidery is an art of decorating a fabric with motifs, pattern or design with a needle. Embroidery or *Phulkari* is acknowledged as of Indian origin and was primarily a part of *dahej* (dowry). This art is mainly practiced in the Malwa region of Punjab. *Phulkari* has great demand in foreign market and the rural women from Patiala districts were engaged in this enterprise.

Table 2. Distribution of women entrepreneurs on the basis of entrepreneurial activity adopted.

Sr. No.	Types of enterprise	<i>f</i>
1.	Pickle making	18 (30)*
2.	<i>Phulkari</i>	13 (21.7)
3.	Bee-keeping	10 (16.7)
4.	Football sewing	9 (15.0)
5.	Vermi composting	4 (6.6)
6.	Mushroom cultivation	3 (5.0)
7.	Sewing jute bags	3 (5.0)
	Total	60 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis are percentages

About 17% rural women entrepreneurs were pursuing bee-keeping enterprise, followed by sewing football (15%), vermi composting (~7%), and preparing jute bags (5%). Women entrepreneurs were also engaged in food processing and dairy farming enterprises. Earlier, Sharma *et al* (2014) reported various successful women entrepreneurs in Sri Muktsar district of Punjab. Mushroom cultivation was also adopted by five percent of the rural women entrepreneurs. *Kavitha et al* (2019) reported that mushroom production is simple, low cost enterprise and plays a significant role to alleviate poverty and generate employment opportunity for educated unemployed youth in rural and semi-urban areas.

Benefits realized from entrepreneurial activities by women entrepreneurs

As per data (Table 3), the women entrepreneurs were getting many benefits in psychological (personal), economic, social and political spheres. Most scholars have attributed need for self-dependence and heightened self-esteem as the motivating factors behind women entrepreneurship. The psychological benefits were self-dependence (~23%) followed by rise in earnings (~18%) and increased self-esteem (~17%).

Table 3. Benefits realized by women entrepreneurs from entrepreneurial activity started.

Sr. No.	Benefits realized	f (%)
1.	Self-dependent	14 (23.3)
2.	Rise in earnings	11 (18.3)
3.	Increased self esteem	10 (16.6)
4.	Better standard of living	08 (13.3)
5.	Improvement in decision-making capability	07 (11.6)
6.	Higher social status	06 (10)
7.	Political empowerment	04 (6.6)
	Total	60 (100)

The other benefits realized were better standard of living (~13%), improvement in decision-making capability (~12%), higher social status (10%) and political empowerment (~7%). Therefore, it can be concluded that setting up of micro-enterprises by women is leading to their holistic well-being and development.

Constraints faced by women entrepreneurs

The data (Table 4) revealed that the lack of credit facilities (~42%) remains the biggest obstacle which a woman entrepreneur were facing, followed by the male-dominant mindset/attitudes (~22%). First and foremost, women did not generally have property in their names to use them as collateral for

obtaining financial help from external sources like banks, co-operatives, moneylenders, etc. Secondly, the fixed attitudes that they are less credit-worthy discouraged many women borrowers and were on the verge of quitting their businesses at any time. Due to the globalized market forces, there is a tough competition and ~18% women entrepreneurs were facing tough competition from multinational companies (MNCs), which were providing products at very cheap rate.

Lack of finance and organizational set-up to expand business was leading to tough competition for marketing their products. Owing to the gender stereotypes prevalent in the society, lack of physical movement of women especially in night was a big hurdle (15%). Similarly, role conflict (15%) or the multiple responsibilities of women *i.e.*, performing house hold core, taking care of children and societal roles was taking its toll and women were not able to focus exclusively on the successful management of their micro-enterprises. Lack of proper education (~12%) remains a big problem. Women entrepreneurs felt that due to lack of proper education, they were not aware of business, technology and knowledge of the market. Therefore, lack of education creates one or other problems for women in the successful starting up and running of business enterprise.

Table 4. Constraints faced by women entrepreneurs of rural Punjab.

Sr. No.	Nature of Problem	f	%
1.	Lack of credit facilities	25	41.7
2.	Male-dominant mindset	13	21.7
3.	Tough competition	11	18.3
4.	Limited physical mobility	9	15.0
5.	Role conflict	9	15.0
6.	Lack of education	7	11.7
7.	Low risk-bearing ability	5	8.3
8.	Lack of marketing know-how	5	8.3
9.	Lack of technical skills	4	6.7
10.	Low self-esteem	3	5.0
11.	Limited access to technology	3	5.0

* Multiple responses

Income Generating Activities Adopted and Constraints Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs were very low risk-takers. Due to lack of marketing know-how (8.3%), and technical expertise (6.7%), low self-esteem (5.0%) and limited access of latest technology (5.0%), women entrepreneurs were facing serious challenges. Since most of the profit is taken away by the middleperson or the multi-national companies as in the case of *Phulkari* making; the woman entrepreneurs' income was very less. Randawa *et al* (2014) also reported various constraints faced by rural entrepreneurs in rural kandi area of Punjab.

In addition to the above mentioned problems; biased social attitudes, less social networking, inadequate infrastructural facilities, high cost of production, unable to adjust to latest technology change and market demand, lack of achievement motivation and various economic constraints also act as severe limitations for women entrepreneurs. Moreover, the external barriers faced by women entrepreneurs were lack of credit facilities, male-dominant mindset, tough competition, role conflict, lack of education, scarcity of raw material, corruption and red tapism etc.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that women entrepreneurs does not belong to homogeneous category; they are divided on the inter sectionalities of rural, urban divide, caste, class, gender, religion and region factors; therefore, a holistic policy for their upliftment and empowerment should consider. The basic and foremost limitation for starting an enterprise was the raising of finance. The fact that in the embroidery business, the middle person and the big brand owners are siphoning off all the profits; as a result, the women entrepreneur are rendered just hand to mouth. The entrepreneurship development programmes should stress on women's training on marketing of products/services and infrastructural development.

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