



## CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: A STUDY ON WOMEN SHGS IN TAMILNADU

**Dr. K.VINODHA  
DEVI**

Assistant Professor, Kristu Jayanti College Bangalore

### ABSTRACT

Women are dynamic by the variety of roles they are playing. A woman lead her family and in turn the entire nation. Empowerment basically is a move away from weakness, towards strength. Of late, women empowerment has emerged as one of the vital issues and is of paramount importance to the stakeholders across the country. Empowering women in general focuses on enriching her in various aspects of life such as- economic, social, legal, political, emotional & spiritual well being.

There may be a variety of methods & approaches to provide her with well being in the listed aspects. Entrepreneurship is one such approach. In the history, we could trace a lot of successful women entrepreneurs despite the frowns of the society. This research paper tries to emphasize entrepreneurship as the key driver for women empowerment. Moreover, the paper also brings to the role played by entrepreneurial motives in fostering women entrepreneurship. The paper also identifies and presents the difference between the respondents belonging to different age groups on their scores on entrepreneurial motives.

### KEYWORDS

Women empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Motives

### Introduction

The World Bank has suggested that empowerment of women should be a key aspect of all social development programs (World Bank, 2001). Women in general are the most disadvantaged people in Indian society, though their status varies significantly according to their social and ethnic backgrounds. Although efforts have been taken to improve the status of women, the constitutional dream of gender equality is miles away from becoming a reality. There are various poverty alleviation programmes that being run by various departments and ministries for the development of women in India. Despite the decades of development the fact remains that women in India are a deprived section of society but no country can be deemed developed if half of its population is severely disadvantaged in terms of basic needs, livelihood options, access to knowledge, and political voice. A number of Women Development programming has laid the foundation for the progress of women entrepreneurship in rural areas.

### Scope of the Study

The study examines the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in rural areas. The areas of concern, however, are the economic, socio-cultural and political barrier which hinders the growth of women entrepreneurship in rural India. The research also focuses on giving suggestion to overcome the challenges by women entrepreneurs.

### Objectives of the Study

The present study has been carried out with the following primary objective

- 1) To identify the challenges faced by microenterprises promoted by women entrepreneurs in rural areas.
- 2) To give suggestions to promote micro enterprises in rural areas.

### Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature pursuing with an aim to analyse the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in rural areas of Kanyakumari District. The analysis is based on primary data collected through semi-structured questionnaire consisting of a mix of factual and attitudinal questions. To analyse the collected data and thereby to draw inference Garrett Ranking technique was used.

### The Area of Study

Kanyakumari is situated in the southernmost part of the Indian peninsula surrounded by Kerala state in the west and north-west, Tirunelveli district in the north and east, Gulf of Mannar in the south-east, Indian Ocean in the south and Arabian Sea in the south-west. It is the smallest district in Tamil Nadu and has a total area of 1,684 sq km which is 1.295 percent of the total area of the state. Administrative set-up of the district includes two revenue divisions, four taluk and nine blocks. The District has four Municipalities, six Assembly Constituencies and One Parliamentary Constituency. There are 97 village panchayats and 56 town panchayats. Nagercoil is the headquarters of Kanyakumari District.

### Sample Design

As the research focus on the women run microenterprises in rural areas the study excludes the microenterprises belong to town panchayats and municipalities. The list of microenterprises belong to village panchayat was collected from Mahalir Thittam office of Kanyakumari District. A sample size of 209 microenterprises was selected from the study area.

### Nature of Micro Enterprises

The SHGs aimed at establishing a large number of micro-enterprises in rural areas targeting women. The SHGs members who run micro-enterprises are referred to as micro entrepreneurs, as their scale of operations is micro in size. Table 1 furnishes the distribution of SHGs women entrepreneurs who are engaged in various entrepreneurial activities which are suited to their local condition.

Nature of Business	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Tailoring	18	8.61
Banana Fiber weaving	44	21.05
Processed Foods	16	7.66
Bag Making	22	10.53
Consumable Durables	34	16.27
Petty shops	33	15.79
Handlooms	20	9.57
Fancy Stores	22	10.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 reveals that the SHGs women respondents are engaged in various entrepreneurial activities. Activity-wise distribution of the sample SHG members shows that the majority (21.05%) of them are engaged in the banana fiber making.

Petty shops are run by 15.79 per cent of the respondents selling grocery items. They are able to earn subsistence income. Remaining respondents are engaged in other entrepreneurial activities such as processed foods (7.66%), bag making (10.53%), consumable durables (16.27%), handlooms (9.57%) and fancy stores (10.53%). Tailoring has been taken up by 8.61 per cent SHGs members. They stitch dresses of all kinds for the local population and also conduct training classes for SHG women

**General Problems of Women Entrepreneurs**

Women entrepreneurs had to face some general problems at the time of business. The problems were problem of finance, scarcity of raw materials, stiff competition, limited mobility, shortage of power and high cost of production. The women entrepreneurs are asked to rank the six problems according to their preferences. The preferences of the women entrepreneurs are given in the following table.

**Table: 2 – General Problems of Women Entrepreneurs**

Sources	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
Problem of Finance	29	57	24	34	39	26	209
Scarcity of Raw-materials	39	35	28	37	36	34	209
Stiff Competition	32	35	41	32	35	34	209
Limited Mobility	41	25	46	41	18	38	209
Shortage of Power	34	25	34	40	41	35	209
High Cost of Production	34	32	36	25	40	42	209
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>1254</b>

Source: Primary data

**Garrett Ranking Technique**

Garrett ranking technique was used to rank the problems. After assigning points to various ranks, the Garrett mean score was calculated by using the following formula.

$$\text{Present Position} = \frac{100(R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

where,

R<sub>ij</sub> – Rank given for the ith reason by jth respondents  
 N<sub>j</sub> – Number of factors ranked by jth respondents

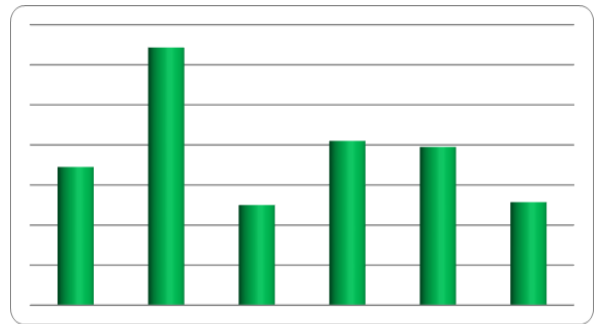
**Table: 3 - Garrett Mean Score - Problems faced by Women Entrepreneurs**

Problems	Garrett Ranking Mean Score	Rank
Problem of Finance	66.45	IV
Scarcity of Raw-materials	69.43	I
Stiff Competition	65.50	VI
Limited Mobility	67.10	III
Shortage of Power	66.95	II
High Cost of Production	65.57	V

Source: Primary data

From the above table 3 it is clear that Scarcity of Raw-materials was the main problem faced by the women entrepreneurs, which secured 69.43 per cent mean score. Then problem of shortage of power was the second most important problem and it secured 66.95 per cent. Stiff competition (65.50%) was the least important problem faced by the women entrepreneurs.

**Figure: 1- Garrett Mean Score - Problems faced by Women Entrepreneurs**



**Suggestions for Improvement in Micro Enterprises**

Suggestions for improvement are necessary for the micro enterprises. Table 4 depicts the suggestions for developing the micro enterprises.

**Table: 4 – Suggestions for Improvement in Micro Enterprises**

Suggestions	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Reduce Loan Procedure	59	28.23
Low Rate of Interest	32	15.31
Control Competition	47	22.49
Proper Training	42	20.10
Continues Power	29	13.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary data

The table 4 reveals that the different suggestions for improvements are given by the respondents. Out of 209 respondents, 59 (28.23%) respondents suggest that reduce the loan procedure is necessary. The suggestion which holds the next place is to have control competition that is 47 (22.49%) respondents have opined in favor of this factor, 42 (20.10%) respondents have expected the proper entrepreneurial training. The fourth suggestion is made by 32 (15.31%) respondents that is, low rate of interest. The last suggestion is to continuous power supply.

**Conclusion**

Women entrepreneurs in rural areas are facing some general problems at the time of business. The study reveals that scarcity of raw-materials was the main problem faced by the women entrepreneurs, which secured 69.43 per cent mean score. The reason behind is majority (21.05%) of them are engaged in the banana fiber making work where the supply of banana fiber is seasonal in nature.

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