



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Commerce

WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: CARVING A NICHE BEYOND GENDER BIAS

KEY WORDS: Gender, entrepreneur, bias, dominant, risk factors, challenges, work-home balance

Yadunandan M C

Assistant Professor of Commerce Government First Grade College Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-560010.

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship has been a world dominated by men. To break the shackles of gender discrimination and carving a niche for oneself is not an easy process. Women across the globe have been successful in overcoming the gender bias and have treaded this path with confidence. This paper is descriptive in nature. It shall also take a look into the socio-economic and psychological perspectives of women as entrepreneurs. It shall touch upon the stereotyped values associated with entrepreneurship and gender.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has turned out to be an interesting area of research. A number of researches have been and is being conducted in this area. The concept of Women and entrepreneurship is another interesting area of research. Various researchers have tried to throw light on the contribution of women to entrepreneurship, success of women as entrepreneurs and the challenges faced by them. Business and entrepreneurship had for long remained an area of men. But it is also true that women have created their own path and climbed the ladder of success as entrepreneurs. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the relationship between entrepreneurship and gender. The challenges faced by women in the path of success shall be touched upon and the psychological factors shall also be discussed.

Entrepreneur is an individual who creates a new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards. The process of setting up a business is called entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is commonly seen as an innovator, a source of new ideas, goods, services and business or procedures. Entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in the growth of an economy. Early 19th Century French Economist Jean-Baptiste Say provided a broad definition of entrepreneurship saying that it shifts economic resources out of an area of lower productivity into an area of higher productivity and greater yield". Entrepreneurs create something new, something different-they change or transmute values.

According to WHO, gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy as well as relationships with each other. WHO further says that gender discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, age, geographical location, gender identity and sexual orientation among others.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Work place is not a bed of roses for women. The challenges faced by women in building a career as entrepreneur are several. The percentage of women who decide to tread the path of entrepreneurship is considerably low when compared with the percentage of men who build their career. The contribution of women to the GDP of a nation and towards reducing the poverty of a nation cannot be neglected. Lack of property or property rights can be a major issue for women. As Giuseppina Maria Cardella, Brizeida Raquel Hernandez Sanchez and Jose Carlos Sanchez – Garcia opine in their article 'Women Entrepreneurship: A systematic review to outline the Boundaries of Scientific Literature', "Property rights facilitate access to resources and, in many institutional contexts, women are particularly limited in their access to the economic resources necessary for entrepreneurship.

risks. Entrepreneurs are expected to be strong, aggressive, daring and bold. All these qualities are naturally associated with men and not with women as they are expected to be more docile, shy, homely and submissive. Women are often seen as highly emotional; a feature that cannot be associated with business goals. Studies have also made it clear that it is easier for men to obtain funds or finance from banks than women. Though there is no specific factor to prove this discrimination; the only possible reason has been the gender bias. There exists a strong belief that women entrepreneurs prefer stabilization of income and minimization of risk. This point can be substantiated by studies conducted by various researches. According to a study conducted by Guzman and Kacperczyk 63% women are less likely than males to obtain external financing in terms of risk capital, and the most significant part of the gap derives from differences in gender.

In their article titled '*Gender and Entrepreneurship: A review and process model*' by Sullivan Diane M. Meek, William R. (2012) published in the Journal of Managerial Psychology, they state that some women view entrepreneurship as a solution to challenges faced in traditional jobs like unfavorable working conditions or work-family conflict. With regard to working conditions, research suggests that women disliked their supervisors and believed that they could do a better job than management, were more likely to pursue entrepreneurship (Zapalska, 1997). In their research Sullivan Diane M. Meek, William R state that women pursue entrepreneurship to gain control over their advancement opportunities, performance evaluations and to create a more pleasant work environment. The troubles involved in striking a balance between work and home has always been pointed at or discussed. This again has been a major area of research over the years. Women strive hard to balance both the areas which can at times be highly stressful. Women prefer lesser working hours at work and long hours at home as this means more time for family and child care. With regard to work-family conflict, women often have a greater responsibility for childcare activities than men and entrepreneurship is viewed as a mechanism toward a more flexible schedule. Yet, as entrepreneurs of any gender increase the amount of time they spend caring for children, the duration of their self-employment decreases (Williams, 2004).

This particular point regarding women should be analyzed in general, irrespective of whether she is an employee or an entrepreneur. It is a clearly known fact that several companies avoid recruitment of women and associate reasons of marriage and child-birth for the same. We can recollect the case of Air India V/s Nargesh Meerza. Air India as per its recruitment policies, required its flight attendants to retire once they reach 35 years of age, upon getting married or upon pregnancy. It is history that she fought for justice and court gave verdict in her favour. These factors are also associated with women entrepreneurs and are the major reasons for looking suspecting the entrepreneurial capabilities of women.

Entrepreneurship comes with its own set of challenges and

Breaking all these barriers and throwing all suspicions to air, several women have created history and have successfully carved a niche for themselves. World over 1/3rd of the entrepreneurial ventures are run by women entrepreneurs says Aradhya D, in his article 'Women Entrepreneurship'. He further says that economic progress, better access to education, urbanization, spread of liberal and democratic culture and recognition by society, there has been a spurt in woman entrepreneurship in India. Special incentives and drives have been created in India to bolster the growth of women entrepreneurs. Schemes like Startup India and Standup also make special case to promote entrepreneurial drive among women. The nations have understood the need of women making their career choices.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT

The characteristics required for both male and female entrepreneurs are the same. Success formula does not change depending on sex of an individual. Any individual irrespective of sex, should put in same amount of hard work, dedication and commitment to go up the career ladder. But the attitude of the society towards women and her success remain biased. Success of a woman is always associated with gender based traits. It is usually believed that women achieve success easily because of beauty than brains. Another misconception that strongly prevails is that men are good in decision-making than women. As Donald L. Sexton and Nancy Bowman-Upton, write in their article "Female and Male Entrepreneurs: Psychological characteristics and their role in gender-related discrimination, published in Elsevier, Journal of Business Venturing, studies have shown that females and males possess the characteristics required for effective performance as managers. Yet negative attitudes towards female exist. Trait analyses studies have found more similarities than differences between the two groups. However, a gap still exists between the actual traits of women business owners and the perception of those traits by others. This gap is even more significant when the impact of the traits on occupational choices is considered.

Though both men and women come from similar socio-economic background, possess the same educational qualifications and are equally enthusiastic in running their own business, most women experience gender based discrimination. The discrimination and stress can be experienced at various levels. Non-acceptance of female in a superior position, discomfort in receiving orders from female boss, unnecessarily doubting the efficiency, ego-clashes, subjecting women to sexual torture, passing comments on her capabilities and making derogatory comments can all be viewed as a part of gender bias.

Most important criteria for any business is the risk factor involved. The readiness to take up the risk is looked differently by men and women. Women are believed to be more hesitant in taking risks when compared to men. But it is important to comprehend that the upbringing or the socio-cultural factors play a pivotal role in the way risk is perceived by men and women. This once again points out to the gender perspective or bias.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of various aspects related to of entrepreneurship and gender make it clear that entrepreneurs are made, not born. Anybody can be an entrepreneur irrespective of gender. The traits necessary for the successful conducting of business does not come by birth. The societal attitude and upbringing has its role in shaping a person as an entrepreneur. There is no fixed success formula that can work out for any individual.

Women entrepreneurs in India are contributing significantly to the growth of nation's economy. But most of the time they are unaware of their contribution. Women have become

successful in breaking the unseen walls built around them by the society and are treading the path of success with confidence. The contribution of women entrepreneurs to the success of our nation's economy needs recognition. They have stepped into all streams of business and have left footprints for the rest to follow. Despite this, it is true that the percentage of women getting into entrepreneurship in India is less. As per the statistics of 2020, India has a total of 58.3 million entrepreneurs out of which 8.05 million are women. This adds up to only 14%, Writes Molishree in her article titled 'Women Entrepreneurship: Unsung saga of economic warriors'. She further says that the data also highlights that 79% of women owned businesses are self-financed and are relatively smaller in size and scale. This justifies the low contribution of Indian women to the GDP (17%).

Global statistics is also far from appreciation. There are around 126 million women entrepreneurs across the globe and the numbers in India are not very pleasing. A survey conducted by tech giant Dell in partnership with the consultancy firm IHS Markit and found out that 2 cities have made it to the list of 50 most favourable global places for women to work. As per this, Bengaluru ranked 40th and Delhi is in the 49th position.

As Mohd Yasir Arafat, Javed Ali, Amit Kumar Dwivedi mention in their article 'Social and Cognitive aspects of Women Entrepreneurs: Evidence from India, A data set of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Adult Population Survey including a sample of 1305 Indians was used and binary logistic regression technique was employed to analyse the data. The finding shows that the entrepreneurial opportunities have no significant influence on women entrepreneurship; risk perception discourages women from becoming entrepreneurs, and perceived capabilities influence the decision of women to engage in entrepreneurship; social network motivates women to be entrepreneurial, and being an informal investor encourages them to start their venture. Surprisingly, we do not find support for opportunity perception. Therefore, policymakers should pay more attention to these factors of perception and social networks so that, the propensity of a woman to become entrepreneur would be increased.

Finally, apart from the big names as women entrepreneurs like Kiran Majumdar Shah, Indira Nooyi, Vandana Luthra, there are several names that have gained the limelight in the year 2021. Aditi Gupta (Menstrupedia), Shradha Sharma (Yourstory), Upasana Taku (Mobiwik), Neeru Sharma (Infibeam), Ankita Gaba (Social Samosa), Aparajita Amar (SHLC- Sexual Harassment Law Compliance Advisory) and several others are performing commendable jobs and deserve appreciation. They have set an example for the rest to follow their footsteps. Millions of women who are a part of businesses, be it self-financed, a startup or a huge enterprise are contributing to the global economy. These women come as a ray of hope for the future generations. Prime Minister's Employment Generation programme and other Government schemes launched by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to support medium and small enterprises has its contribution in creation of women entrepreneurs. More and more women are undergoing training.

The future looks positive. But the need of the hour is to concentrate on and tackle the challenges existing in creation of a gender-bias free atmosphere. Providing more exposure to women regarding startups or entrepreneurship, facilitating training in business and skill development, bridging the urban-rural divide especially in relation to business growth, sensitization which can facilitate more family support are the factors that requires attention. If these are tackled efficiently, women's contribution the nation's economy can considerably soar high and magical numbers can be expected.

REFERENCES

1. <https://sci-hub.mkxa.top/10.1108/02683941211235373>
2. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01557/full>
3. <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/women/women-entrepreneurship/women-entrepreneurship/99813>
4. Williams, D.R (2004), "Effects of childcare activities on the duration of self employment in Europe", *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*, Vol.28, No.5, pp 467-85
5. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S088390269090024N> Donald L. Sexton, Nancy Bowman-Upton, "Female and Male Entrepreneurs: Psychological characteristics and their role in gender-related discrimination, Elsevier, *Journal of Business Venturing*, Volume 5, Issue 1, pages 29-36
6. Molishree, "Women: Entrepreneurship: Unsung saga of Economic warriors", ET Government.com, February 1st 2020. <https://government.economic-times.indiatimes.com/news/economy/women-entrepreneurship-unsung-saga-of-economic-warriors/73825285>