

Entrepreneurship Among Poverty-ridden Women: The Confidence Building Index

Jayashree Upadhye

Abstract—Women from the lower strata of the society though educated, are unable to find employment in urban India. It is entrepreneurship that paves the path of development for these women in particular and the society in general. This paper considers women from such strata of society turning into entrepreneurs in city of Pune, Maharashtra India. This paper attempts to portray a picture of transformation of the personality, the economic and social status of women from the such strata of the society. The paper makes an attempt to profile the change with the development of an index. The findings of the study do indicate of a marked change in the personality, the economic and the social status of these women. The results are found to be statistically significant. However, the fact remains that skills, earnings, honour, work efficiency and even the elevated economic status of women entrepreneurs need not necessarily change the approach of society towards women. The male dominance in society is reluctant to change their attitude towards women.

Index Terms—Women entrepreneurs, empowerment, training, social impact.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment can be viewed as a process in which women challenge the existing norms and culture, to effectively improve upon personality, status in the family as well as in the society. One solution to empower women especially is to take up entrepreneurial ventures on a small scale. In urban area of India, it is difficult to find employment, more so for women coming from the lower strata of the society even when educated to a certain extent. It is here the SHGs have paved the path through entrepreneurship. The magnifying effect of entrepreneurship development is seen not only in elevating the economic status of women but also for the personality development as well as the social status of women.

All countries in the world that are identified as 'developed' agree for having provided equality of opportunity and access to women in economic, social and political spheres. This inclusiveness was possible due to formal legal provisions and democratic political system in those developed countries. However, in the Indian context, it is not easy to understand women's empowerment in the light of cultural heterogeneity and male dominance in the society, Thus on the parameters like social, economic, political and household level, empirical measurement of women empowerment across India and many States is very difficult.

The present paper is a study of changing personality,

economic and social status of small urban women entrepreneurs who as members of SHGs have started their entrepreneurial activity with help of the mentor NGO. Women have shown the initiative and the potential to start an enterprise and have grabbed the opportunities extended by mentor NGOs for vocational training, finance, marketing etc. and have transformed themselves into an entrepreneur.

According to the Government of India, women entrepreneurship is where 'an enterprise is owned and controlled by a women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of employment.'

As per the definition given by Sanjka Mishra [1], women entrepreneur is where 'the women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise'.¹ She presents the following categories of Women Entrepreneurs found in India: (i) the first category – the successful, professional qualified, financially strong women entrepreneur generally found in big cities in non-traditional areas (ii) the second category is women with sufficient level of education found in cities and town involved in traditional as well as non-traditional areas and (iii) the third category is women entrepreneurs with little or no education (illiterate), financial weak, involved in family occupations or traditional occupations or agriculture or related occupations.

The present paper considers the second category of women entrepreneurs.

A. Objectives and Methodology

1) Objectives

To study the nature of SHG-sponsored enterprises owned and managed by woman entrepreneurs from the lower income groups in urban areas with reference to the Pune city (Maharashtra, India).

To evaluate the Personal, Economic and Social status of these small women entrepreneurs in Pune city.

2) Hypothesis

Empowerment through Entrepreneurship has an influence on the personal, economic and social status of women

B. Review of Literature

While reviewing the literature on the subject, one observes that there is a broad chronological order of the concepts and the framework on the Gender Empowerment Measures. It is evident that there has been a refinement in the concepts and framework as well as development of new models regarding women empowerment; it is a continuous process and is dependent on socio-culturally relevant data. To begin with, the United Nation's Development Programmes attempted to create a gender empowerment index in 1995 that focused on the equal participation in the economic, political and professional fields, The Beijing Conference on Women in

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J. Upadhye is with the Abeda Inamdar Senior College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Pune, Maharashtra, India (e-mail: jrupadhye@yahoo.com).

1995 also emphasised on the practical actions for economic empowerment of women, The Women Entrepreneur Summit in Paris in 1997 made an attempt to find out both the obstacles and opportunities for potential women entrepreneurship, their development etc. [2]

At the same time, there are certain Alternative Analytical Frameworks [3] on Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM).

Firstly, the UNDP's Gender Empowerment Measure under the Human Development Index the GEM brought sex-differentials to fore in parameters such as literacy and health outcomes through the Human Development Reports, the first of its kind published in 1991. Subsequently in 1995, the UNDP also formalized gender empowerment using the political, economic and societal factors of the highest order. Since the above index was however less useful and applicable in case of states, districts and other social and economic criteria, the Harvard Institute of Development put forth the Gender Roles Framework. This is an analytical framework developed highlighting the differences between states, districts and other social and economic criteria. Further on, the Gender Planning Framework was developed; this framework links the development process to the enhancement of the role of women in the society. Moser's however stresses on the productive, the reproductive and the community work role of women, its practical and strategic gender needs. The Social Relations Approach; this approach uses concepts like relationships between people, their relationship to resources and activities, and how these are re-worked through the institutions of state, market, community, and family etc. The framework helps to examine the social institutional parameters that explain how gender inequality is formed and reproduced at the individual level leading to further inequalities; the Gender Analysis Matrix; a method that attempts to determine the impact of developmental measures on women and men. The method made use of what is referred to as a community-based technique for identifying and analyzing gender differences. In the Indian context, the report of the ministry of woman and child welfare, does not isolate the socio-culturally sensitive factors that ideally measure woman's empowerment amongst the Indian population. Instead, it carries forwarded the UNDP suggested variables which are rather topical in nature and only captures very high and idealistic level of empowerment.

On the backdrop of above concepts and frameworks, the present paper attempts to develop empowerment index of women from the lower strata of the society in urban India.

C. Data & Methodology

Being exploratory in nature, the study was carried out through a field survey; interviews were carried out of women entrepreneurs in urban areas of the city of Pune, these women started their enterprise with the help of SHGs and respective NGO in the field. The sample was selected with the help of the concerned NGOs in the field and the SHGs sponsored by the Pune Municipal Corporation. These women have been members of these NGOs / SHGs.

The sample considered are the beneficiaries of various entrepreneurship development schemes and women carrying out tiny or small scale businesses like, primary food

processing, canning, bags making, handicraft, weaving, running beauty parlours, small shops etc. The sample is collected from the various parts of Pune city.

The basic criteria while selecting the sample are -those women who undergone an initial vocational training programme.

- Those women running the businesses for minimum of three years.
- Those women entrepreneurs who have maintained accounts, correspondence, etc.
- Those women entrepreneurs who have a record of the growth of their business.

Based on the above mentioned criteria, a total of 247 women entrepreneurs engaged in tiny or small business were interviewed.

D. Data Collection

The present study is carried out with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was made in local language, i.e. Marathi. The questionnaire was developed with the help of people associated / involved with NGOs / SHGs along with the review of related local level studies in the field. The questionnaire aimed at creating (i) a basic profile (personal) and (ii) a economic and social profile of the respondents.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts i.e. 1) general information about respondents like, family background, Education, type of enterprise, training, income from enterprise etc. 2) Information pertaining to personality, Economical and Social status before and after starting enterprise. The information was sought on following parameters -

- Personality Status - Self confidence, Change in Personality and Outlook, Domestic Violence and Resistance to domestic violence, Family Security, Household responsibility, Place in the family, Decision making position, Sharing of household work. Mental satisfaction, Reduction in drudgery of work, etc.
- Economic Status- Economic independence, Economic decision-making power in the family, Participation in children education, Custody of money in the family, Position to help one's own parents, SHG Membership, the habit of Saving, Bank A/C for oneself, life insurance, Mediclaim policy for oneself, Other Investments, Opinion sought towards important household & other spending.
- Social Status – Appreciation and Respect in society, participation in social work, Freedom to work for society, Social Leadership, Role as Advisor or as a mediator to solve problems in the locality, Participation in political canvassing, Elected in position of cooperatives, federations, corporations etc., Social Awards, Invitation as a resource person.

Data was collected on above parameters on the position of these women before and after starting an enterprise, an attempt is made to analyze the data in the form an index – the Personal, Economic and Social Status of women before and after their entrepreneurial venture.

- The index is a simple calculation of scores given to questions by the respondents on the personal, economic and social aspects of their lives. This is to make an

assessment of the changing profile of respondents who are women entrepreneurs.

- Each question carried a total score of five points for the parameter mentioned above before and then change after starting the enterprise. This is to observe any change in the personality, economic and social status of the respondents as a result of the training and support received through government programmes, the encouragement and guidance of NGOs / SHGs.
- The following weights were allotted to each question, i.e. 1 as 20%, 2 as 40%, 3 as 60%, 4 as 80% and 5 as 100. The respondents had to assign points on the personality, economic and social status as the situation before they received training to set up and manage a business enterprise and the change undergone after starting the enterprise.
- For each status, twelve questions were asked. A sum total is done out of 60 points (12 Q. X 5 points each) for retro as well as the answers for the contemporary situation. The same method was followed to determine personal, economic and social status of women entrepreneurs.

E. Limitations of the Study

- The study covers women entrepreneurs who are members of SHG and successful in their small entrepreneurial ventures in the Pune city.
- The answers sought for the personal, economical and social status before starting business is retrospective in nature, and hence the limitations of retrospective answer that are likely to reflect the analysis.

II. OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

The analysis of the data for the sample selected of 247 respondents is as follows-

- Age – Almost 70% sample is of more than 30 years age.
- Marital Status – 85% of the respondents are married women, out of which 5% were widows.
- Type of Family– About 60% of the sample stay in a joint family.
- Family occupational background - 60 entrepreneurs had agriculture as family occupation, 08 entrepreneurs had some small business as family occupation, no entrepreneurs had earnings through some type of jobs in or outside village basically for agro based activities.
- Type of business – The table shows the distribution of sample on various entrepreneurial activities
- Level of education– 70% of the sample has only education more than S.S.C. and hence the sample represents a moderate level of literacy.
- Computer Literacy – About 60 % women from the sample are computer literate.
- Type of Training Received - All respondents had undergone some or other type of training.
- Monthly earning through entrepreneurial activity – 40% of the sample made a monthly income of upto `10,000; 55% of the sample made a monthly income between `10,000-`20,000 and 5% of the sample made a monthly income of `20,000 – `25,000; there were no observation above `25000
- Employment Generated – About 80% of the sample did generate employment –min. 1 and max. 9

TABLE I: TYPES OF ENTERPRISE

Sr. No	Type of Enterprise	Frequency	Sample Selected (%)
1	Processed Food Items	65	26.31%
2	Ready to eat items (Fresh)	23	09.37%
3	Fashion Designing	37	14.96%
4	Purses and Bags Making	28	11.33%
5	Handicraft	30	12.14%
6	Sweaters weaving	18	07.28%
7	Beauty Parlour	13	05.26%
8	Shop	15	06.07%
9	Other	18	07.28%
	Total	247	100%

III. PERSONALITY, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROFILE

TABLE II: PERSONAL, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL PROFILE

	PERSONALITY STATUS		ECONOMIC STATUS		SOCIAL STATUS	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Min	12	43	11	36	12	36
Max	22	54	17	53	22	53
Mean	18.41	41.42	13.52	45.38	15.94	47.11
Stdev	2.71	3.16	1.17	5.65	2.95	4.15
C. V.	0.11	0.66	0.08	0.12	0.18	0.08

- Personality Status – Respondents were of the opinion that there was a marked difference in their personality with the success of the small entrepreneurial venture; confidence in taking up and finishing tasks, self-confidence in handling risks, and more importantly confidence in oneself to do more.
- Economic Status- Respondents were of the opinion that the entrepreneurial venture gave the much required economic independence, self-reliance and autonomy to a certain extent over resources. It gave them the opportunity to satisfy the petite needs of the family, education needs of the children, etc.
- Social Status - Respondents were of the opinion that the entrepreneurial venture gave them opportunity towards a more open social life and social recognition. Some of them were of the opinion that it also gave them an opportunity to participate in the local self government. However, the respondents accepted the fact that there is little change in their social status.

A. Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis of the present study is ‘Empowerment through Entrepreneurship has an influence on the personal, economic and social status of women.’

A test of significance (t-test) was carried out to test whether there is a difference in the personal, economic and social status of these women between the two periods, i.e. before and after these women acquired basic training and set up a small business venture. The results are found to be statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance.

There is a difference found in the personality, economic and social status of these women entrepreneurs. Training,

encouragement and support have made a difference to the lives of these women. The hypothesis (H₁) stands accepted.

TABLE III: PERSONAL, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL PROFILE

	Personality Status	Economic Status	Social Status
t-statistic	-139.84	-107.72	-108.58
Level of significance	0.01	0.01	0.01

IV. CONCLUSION

Malhotra et al. [4] identified methodological approach in measuring and analyzing the empowerment of women. The study made use of the following parameters: domestic decision-making, finance and resource allocation, social and domestic matters, child related issues, access to or control over resources, freedom of movement, and so on. Stine and Karina [5] explains that empowerment is the gain of power to control their lives and the ability to make strategic life choices. Dr. Thresiamma Varghese, [6] further identified income, education, employment, media exposure and acquisition of assets, knowledge of legal rights, political rights and land ownership etc. as parameters to judge the empowerment of women.⁶ The present study is much similar in its findings as stated in the above studies. The following conclusions are made:

- In the personality status, especially the self confidence and the psychological satisfaction gained by respondents is very important; it enabled them to shoulder further entrepreneurial activity or face any problem in the family.
- However the respondents were of the opinion that the efficiency, skills, earnings, honour received and the even elevated economic status of women entrepreneurs cannot change the attitude of society towards women in general. Male dominance in society is reluctant to change their attitude towards women.
- The systematic and wholehearted role of the mentor NGO/s in the transformation of these women from lower strata of the society.
- Backward and forward support from agencies to these women entrepreneurs is the important factor to sustain them in their business ventures.

- Power over economic resources and participation in decision-making is making them more confident and that is the women empowerment in true sense.

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Jayashree

Upadhye

Pune.M.A.(Economics)1993, Ph. D.(Economics) 2006, P.G.D.B.M.(Diplomain Management) 2011,(University of Pune, Maharashtra, India). Major Field of Study - development economics, agro-based industry, women entrepreneurship. She is Associate Professor in Abeda Inamdar Senior College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Pune, Maharashtra, India. She has teaching experience of 17 years. She published articles-1) ASIAN QUARTERLY, (ISSN NO. 2229-581) an international Journal of Contemporary Issues. Vol. No. 7, Issue no. 2, August 2009. Title: Vocational Training: A Catalyst to Empower Rural Women. 2) ASIAN QUARTERLY (ISSN NO. 2229-581) an international Journal of Contemporary Issues. Vol. No. 2, Issue No. 2. Title: WTO and Processed Food Export: an Evaluation. 3) COSMOS a Journal Published by AISC, Pune August 2010 (ISBN No: 978-81-907408-5-2) Title - Rural Women Development through Vocational Training: An Evaluation. She has completed three research projects sponsored by University Grants Commission (An apex agency in Higher Education in India). Majority of her research pertains to Agro based Industries and Women Entrepreneurship. Dr. Upadhye is Life Member of Indian Economic Association. She is a senior member of International Economics Development Research Center (IEDRC) and International Association of Computer Science and Information Technology (IACSIT). She got 'The Best Paper Of The Session Award' at CEBMM, 2012, Singapor from 26th to 28th Feb. 2012 for the paper entitled 'Entrepreneurship and Women Empowerment: Evidence from Pune City'.