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## Original Research Article

## Women entrepreneurs: Together we can make a difference

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## ABSTRACT

A globally felt progressive idea for business world identified is entrepreneurship (Scott, 1986) creating diverse opportunities for future potential performers (Mitra, 2002). Education of women have resulted in greater self-confidence and encouragement to serve and discover new business avenues. Women have started realizing that the survival of their families and their own potential lies only in working side by side with men (Marlow, 2002). Apart from multi-faceted economic pressures there are other reasons for women coming into entrepreneurship. This study gives an insight regarding various Socio-Economic progressions leading to women start-ups at their own home in Indore city. The paper also discusses various personal, family, market and culture based factors that are a matter of concern in the development of female entrepreneurs. The study aims to support and encourage these small scale entrepreneurial activities and suggest ways to integrate these small businesses into existing urban economies raising awareness amongst economically active change agents thereby influencing social and economic policies addressing issues and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs of Indore city.

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## 1. Introduction

Whether there is a mountain to climb, a channel to navigate, a road to pass through, a world to triumph over or a business to run, 'I dare to' says the woman of today.

Economic independence of women is important as it enhances their ability to take decisions and exercise freedom of choice, action. Working women, who independently handle their income also have their contributions in the household need of finances. Their opinions are valued at their work place. Most of the time they are free to spend their income but sometimes certain investments or expenses require prior consulting with their better halves. Indian culture restricts the entry of women in certain jobs like in factories, stores, public sectors and hence the informal sector takes a lead. More women may be involved in

undocumented or disguised wage work than in the formal labor force.<sup>1-4</sup>

Advancement in technology and means of communication, has made the world a global community, creating new channels and opening avenues for women to explore new business opportunities by tapping their potential aptitudes (Carter, 2001). More and more women are stepping out of their comfort zones into powerful roles. One such role is that of an entrepreneur. These women entrepreneurs are leaders, change makers and influencers. Woman entrepreneurship is not a new concept but undoubtedly women are hesitant to come up with their venture due to socio-economic and psycho-social trends and pressures. This keeps them away from becoming potential entrepreneurs (Hisrich, 1999).

Although female entrepreneurship is not a new concept but being a patriarchal society a woman is bit reluctant

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to come up with startups. This may be due to either a trend existing in the community or family responsibilities barricading potential entrepreneurs especially in developing countries. (Hisrich, 1999).

An entrepreneur is a risk taker and is always up for the challenges. Women Entrepreneur can be defined as a woman or group of women who initiate, organize and run a business enterprise

There are various fostering factors that influence a woman to become an entrepreneur. Researches called it as ‘Necessity-push’ and ‘Opportunity-pull’ motivations. Motivational needs are ‘Opportunity-pull’ whereas facilitating needs are ‘Necessity-push’ factors.

‘Necessity-push’ motivated entrepreneurs are those who are dissatisfied with their current status, or out of urgency start a new venture. Similarly ‘Opportunity-pull’ motivated entrepreneurs are those who are attracted by their new venture idea and initiate venture activity because of the attractiveness of the business idea and its personal implications (Amit, 1994; GEM, 2011; Bygrave, 2002).

## 2. Conceptual Framework

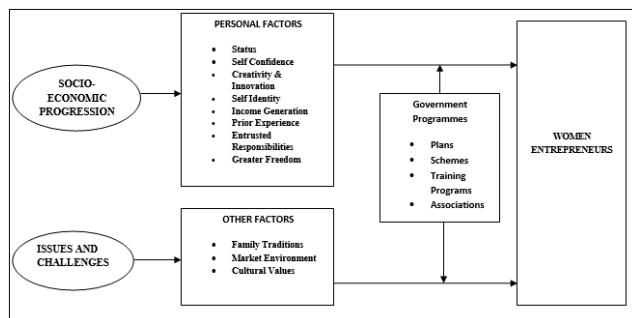


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework Source: Author

## 3. Data Methodology

The study was Exploratory in nature. In this study, women entrepreneurs with their venture at their own residence; from Indore city were selected for data collection. Sampling method used was non-probability sampling. It was a purposive sampling. Sampling was based on the respondents drawing a monthly salary upto Rs 40000/-.

### 3.1. Tools for data collection

A Structured questionnaire after pilot testing was administered to a final sample of 50 respondents

Secondary data has been used to identify and support various other issues/factors which the women entrepreneurs are facing while doing their business.

### 3.2. Tools for data analysis

Data was analyzed using Weighted means.

## 4. Objectives of Study

1. To identify various Socio-Economic progressions leading to women start-ups in Indore city.
2. To analyze various issues /factors which the women entrepreneurs are facing while doing their business.
3. To suggest measures that will remove barriers faced by these women entrepreneurs.

## 5. Results

The various Socio-Economic progressions leading to women start-ups identified are as mentioned in Table 1. On Likert scale it was measured in terms of satisfaction ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, where 5 meant Strongly Agree, 4 means Agree, 3 means Neutral, 2 means Disagree and 1 means Strongly Disagree. Table 1 shows the results.

## 6. Status in Society

### 6.1. Ranking: 6

One should not be surprised to know that female leaders are on rise specifically as self employed entrepreneurs. Basically the reason being the attraction of flexi working from home is quite luring. Female entrepreneurship can add to economic development and there are significant differences in the approach and perspective amongst male and female entrepreneurs.<sup>5-8</sup>

Women entrepreneurs tend to own smaller businesses, operate with lower levels of overall capitalization, start and manage firms in different industries than men. Initially their business growth rate may not be the same as that of the firms where males are into business operations. Entrepreneurial activities are still hampered by constraints that often tend to be gender specific, such as cultural norms, unequal employment opportunities and restricted access to finance for women (Vijayakumar, A. and Jayachitra, 2013).<sup>9-13</sup>

Women transitioning back to work may not have valued contribution or considered meaningful for assignments. Such women become re-engaged in business to enter the workforce and become entrepreneurs (Williams and Gurtoo, 2011). More and more women are now endeavoring to create wealth through their own ventures. Women in the middle age group have their maximum responsibilities, but they have to utilize their talent. At that time, they switch into some home operated businesses like providing coaching to students, opening a beauty parlour, cooking classes, art and craft classes, starting a slimming centre and so on. Finding a way to combine running a business and the household is more and more possible because of the way technology has opened up new vistas of opportunity.

**Table 1:** Socio-Economic progressions leading to Start-Ups

| Socio-Economic progressions Identified | 5 Strongly Agree | 4 Agree | 3 Neutral | 2 Disagree | 1 Strongly Disagree | Weighted means | Rank |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------|------------|---------------------|----------------|------|
| Status in Society                      | 18               | 13      | 7         | 10         | 2                   | 3.66           | 6    |
| Building Self Confidence               | 23               | 14      | 6         | 2          | 5                   | 3.96           | 4    |
| Creativity and Innovation              | 27               | 15      | 2         | 4          | 2                   | 4.22           | 3    |
| Self Identity                          | 22               | 7       | 3         | 13         | 5                   | 3.56           | 7    |
| Income Generation                      | 36               | 6       | 2         | 6          | 0                   | 4.44           | 1    |
| Prior Industry and Work Experience     | 18               | 8       | 4         | 11         | 9                   | 3.30           | 8    |
| Entrusted Responsibility               | 33               | 9       | 2         | 4          | 2                   | 4.34           | 2    |
| Greater Freedom and Mobility           | 22               | 8       | 13        | 1          | 6                   | 3.78           | 5    |

## 7. Building Self Confidence

### 7.1. Ranking: 4

Self-Confidence focuses on having a sense of purpose, a positive outlook and faith in oneself. Without Self-Confidence becoming a successful entrepreneur is nearly impossible. If a woman wants to become an entrepreneur, or she is an entrepreneur and wants to be successful, she needs to begin focusing on building confidence in herself.

As shown in the table, Self Confidence is the aspect ranking fourth with weighted means as 3.97; that marks improvement in the social status. The self-confidence a woman gets after working in her own venture is remarkable. She is able to handle all odds and tries new ways and means which can help in business and self growth. She is able to face challenges of life and could identify opportunities for her progression. A total of 23 respondents have strongly agreed to it; many of them have placed it in very good status. Doing a business successfully, require making tough decisions. Set-backs occur while working on a new business. It shows that when self-confidence is strengthened, it leads to far reaching impacts for the venture as well as the family thus making it a societal improvement.<sup>14–19</sup> Women entrepreneurs are potentially more doubtlessly more confident and identify the existing fallow opportunities than women who are non-entrepreneurs. Women perceive their paid jobs as a platform which enables them to move on towards their entrepreneurial activity as their future career objective (Gem report, 2012).

Income aids in increasing self-confidence. Women with higher incomes are more confident as compared to low income earning women and are successful in their careers. They are equally capable of doing any task and have capacity to work and excel in professional life as well as can be equally gifted homemakers.

## 8. Creativity and Innovation

### 8.1. Ranking: 3

Women entrepreneurs have explicit uniqueness that promote their creativity and generate new ideas and new ways of doing things. As seen Creativity and Innovation has been ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with a weighted mean of 4.22. Newness, novelty, difference are the elements of creative behaviors (Herrmann, 1996). Creativity leads to innovation and Innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship see innovation as one of the prime and central theme for small businesses. They are able to compete with large industry and see their value in the economy. Small businesses are vital as they are directly concerned within the community and so on, contribute to their monetary and economic gain. These little businesses recognize precisely what community desires and fulfill them. All things start small. Perhaps these women entrepreneurs have a vision to carve a niche in a particular business. With creativity and innovation, they personally try to find a way to fulfill the ideas. Self-propelled and self-motivated they remain focused on their vision, innovate, initiate and adopt business practices creatively. For active innovation, they have to bear in mind of amendment, and creatively use it to their advantage – The Surprising, Incongruities, Process Need, Industry and Market Structures, Demographics, Changes in Perception, New Knowledge (Drucker).

## 9. Self Identity

### 9.1. Ranking: 7

With a ranking of 7<sup>th</sup> and weighted mean 3.56; Self Identity continues through our lives as we identify with our possessions and the things around us and feel heart trending when they are changed or lost. Marriage is the biggest turning point in a girl's life; which makes a drastic

shift in her priorities. Family expectations and personal commitments may become a barrier. Maintaining self identity is a must to avoid distress and tears.

Management comes naturally to women; whether it is home or work. She puts her 100% every time and enjoys whatever she does and encourages and motivates her family members, colleagues, friends etc. Today, women with their enhanced skills motivation and increased demographics in the work place have taken up the challenge of entrepreneurship and have been able to put forth her Self Identity (Lee and Rogoff, 1997). Self Identity is the way a woman look at herself and her relationship to the world. Understanding this, allows you to examine who you are and more importantly create who you want to be. More and more women are now endeavoring to create wealth through their own ventures. Also, females losing or leaving job turn to self-employment instead of pounding the pavement in search of another job. In an interview study, women business owners stated frequently their desire to prove “I can do it” (Gay’s, 1997).

## 10. Income Generation

### 10.1. Ranking: 1

Working females either prefer working in industry sector or enter into their own business which they can generally operate from home. The options may be providing tuitions to small school going children, opening a boutique, stitching shops, beauty centres, opening cookery and baking classes, opening fitness and yoga centers and so on.

Women generally prefer to work on their own while doing their household affairs since it allows them flexible timings. Further, it can also be concluded that they seek independence in their work and wouldn’t like to be governed by others further showing their preference for independence and risk taking ability. As the business continuous and rises, more profits are generated. The key financial goal for any parent including mothers is saving for child’s education and marriage. It is one of the major concerns for all Indian parents. In the initial level of schooling, financial burden is less as compared to the cost of education at college level. It may become serious a matter of concern if the child has to go for higher education from a good university. Planning after retirement-life is important so that in future they are able to maintain their own standard of living without being dependent on children or anyone else. Whether it is a service woman or a business woman; the aim of their working is one and the same i.e. Savings. Working women try supporting their family to provide the basic necessities. They also felt that the education is most important for leading better life. So, they think of providing the best education in best schools to their children. Expenses may also be related to buying a house, saving up for a family, and finally paying off your student loans, car loans and credit card

debts. The standard of living has improved. Items which were erstwhile categorized as luxuries are today found more commonly with people of almost all income categories. Travel, tourism, hospitality have also seen an upswing. The consumer durables have found a new consumer base in working women. The industries that have benefited are the cell phones, consumer loans, small cars, and high end white goods.

The tentative family expenditure has increased over the time. With long hours of commuting especially in the urban areas, managing the basic necessities of life, raising one or more children, the ageing parents, making alternate arrangements for their children either a mother or a mother-in law or a maid to look after their children; all add to the expenditure. Also to maintain the standard of living, many families take loans for housing, two/four wheeler, educational loan, etc. and paying EMI’s have given a tough time to the families in curtailing the expenses.

The financial demands on the Indian families are becoming fiercer day by day. New trends of modern living has added to the rising cost of living. Necessities of life are compelling females to shoulder dual responsibilities leading into more and more women to seek employment outside home. There are many compelling reasons for a woman to start their business (Bharat, 1995). Most of the working women opt for job out of the gross economic necessity, followed by the urge to raise economic status, to make use of education to have independent income and the remaining due to miscellaneous motives.

## 11. Prior Industry and Work Experience

### 11.1. Ranking: 8

Literature supports that any prior work experience, education and managerial experience contribute to women’s business growth and have positive impact on entrepreneurial performance (Gatewood, Brush, Carter, Greene & Hart, 2004). As seen from the table, Prior Industry and Work Experience has been ranked 8<sup>th</sup> with a weighted mean of 3.30.

A new business opportunity exists if an individual has more work experience, a higher level of education, more knowledge of the market and business practice. Human capital results due to formal education and training and also include experience and practical learning derived from previous paid employment or managerial position, and it is a vital condition for technological innovation (Gatewood et al., 2004). Experience, age and social networks were also found to have significant positive influence on entrepreneur’s business performance in USA (Shane, 2003).

## 12. Entrusted Responsibility

### 12.1. Ranking: 2

The goals of working men and women are generally different in terms of many things. A female has to take up a job or a business; in case when the husband has either no job or earns bare minimum to run a family or otherwise due to sickness or death of husband. Entrusted Responsibility has a 2<sup>nd</sup> ranking with weighted mean of 4.34. Women generally prefer either working in industry sector or enter into their own business which they can generally operate from home like providing tuitions to small school going children, opening a beauty parlour, organizing and conducting cookery and baking classes, opening fitness and yoga centers and so on. For this women do not need any financing to start their business. This is consistent with the fact that women tend to start smaller sized business that is to say that women are more likely to own businesses in service sectors like education, personal, retail services or health care, where investment required is less. Some may open up a boutique which may give a higher income anywhere between Rs 10000/- Rs 40,000/-. Acquiring necessities of life, women are motivated to be entrepreneurs to improve the quality of life of their children, to share the family economic burden and to adjust and manage household and business life successfully on their own terms.

## 13. Greater Freedom and Mobility

### 13.1. Ranking: 5

The last progression seen is women entrepreneurs have greater freedom and mobility with a ranking 5<sup>th</sup> and weighted mean 3.78. More and more females are now into higher education. In present scenario, there are many working women, who are highly educated and qualified to take up jobs in various sectors and are working, earning and contributing to their household expenses. The development in the literacy rate of female has been increased by ten times which is seen far better than the literacy rate of males since from last fifty years.

Women with a high level of education are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship (Wit and Van, 1989). As more of the families are becoming nuclear, the women entrepreneur has less family related responsibilities as compared to joint families. Very smartly, effectively and efficiently; they manage their family and also move out for purchase of material required in the business. Frequency of mobility is also increased as business gain momentum. Making use of IT and associations also has minimized the administrative burdens on women entrepreneurs. These women have the freedom to spend their income, the way they want to, whether it is planning for a vacation, entertainment, investment, buying of property, household products, etc.

## 14. Issues and Challenges

In the present scenario, due to IT industries many other Indian industries have entered the global market on a large scale. These IT industries are a role model to other industries mostly run on management style. Innovation at every level and of every kind can be seen in IT industries.

### 14.1. Family traditions

Traditionally, Indian economy supported entrepreneurship. Family traditions, customs, religion, caste and creed is still prevailing in Indian society. Community members promote and help their own caste members to become entrepreneurs. They have a well developed support system to push entrepreneurship among their 'biradari'. Artisans-system was a well known practice in India. Through many generations, the artisans developed their profession and made it richer in skills and knowledge by continuously innovating, experimenting and expanding. (Shabana. A.M, 2010) Mentoring and counseling are a part of Indian social system. In joint families, the family head as well as the elders in the family play the role of mentor. The 'Panchayat in the villages and the 'Biradari' act in the capacity of counselor as/if the need arises.

As a developing country, India women are often underutilized, where the formal family avenues are reserved for men, women self employment is often sought as a means to alleviate poverty, unemployment and gender based occupational segregation (Ahl, 2006). Acknowledging a woman in leadership role is still a long way to go. Mother entrepreneurs have dual responsibilities to their businesses and their families and this often result in work life disturbances. Failure is often seen as an excuse for relinquishing their goals.

### 14.2. Market environment

Women entrepreneurs who have little or no formal education face more problems when it comes to business development or even managing routine tasks. Basic facilities like transportation, banking and insurance aspects, raw material inventory, marketing services, product marketing is still not very efficient in India. The progress of entrepreneurial industries is slow and new women entrepreneurs face difficulties in setting up their venture. Lack of access to finance is a critical issue that impacts the growth of any business on day to day basis. Banks are reluctant and show clear discrimination to lend and operate a binary system that favors men (Carter & Rosa, 1998). Acceptance and respect of a woman in market is another critical issue. Networking becomes a challenge and lack of advice, high rents, discrimination are creating tough times for women in a patriarchal society in India.

### 14.3. Cultural values

Patriarchal values do impact the level of acceptance and respect which women can have within market and her networks (Kuada, 2009). Sometimes it results into harassment when a 'male dominated society' finds a woman 'stepping out of line' and entering the masculine public space of work and business. Cultural challenges do exist across all countries. While there may be commonalities across India, in terms of the type and the level of the challenge encountered, the distinction is purely cultural or patriarchal values practiced in each situation.

## 15. Conclusion

Today's women are highly educated, technically sound and professionally qualified. They are trying to explore their talents through small ventures operating from home like beauty parlours, cooking and baking classes, yoga classes, coaching centres, boutique, etc. Their role in economic development is also being recognized and steps have already been taken to promote them. The need of the hour is the revival of entrepreneurship amongst women to outshine in their small start-ups; contributing to the society as well as the entire economy.

### 15.1. Managerial implications

Majority of women entrepreneurs are from middle class families. Their potential should be identified and trained. Adequate infrastructure support may be helpful. Mobile training centres ought to be opened. Post-training follow-up is vital. Out-beating our conservative and rigid thought process will motivate women to manage their own business rather than be dependent upon wage employment outlets. For women entrepreneurship striving for excellence, the atmosphere should be conducive with proper financial assistance with a focus on moulding their entrepreneurial traits and skills so that the issues and challenges can be overcome and become competent for fulfilling the changes in the trend. Since women entrepreneurs can contribute both to formal and informal economy (Aderemi. et.al,2008), doors need to be open in the form of policy prescriptions incorporating alternatives to problematic areas discussed in the study. Apart from this their contribution needs to be recognized at a wider level setting examples for future women entrepreneurs.

### 15.2. Limitations and directions for future research

The study is limited to small women entrepreneurs (drawing a monthly salary upto Rs 40000/-) of Indore city. Studies can be conducted on other women in Indore who are into medium or large sized business.

A comparative study in terms of women entrepreneur environment among upper, middle and lower class can be

done.

A comparative study amongst women entrepreneurs in different sectors like manufacturing, services and others can also be done.

In terms of regions; rural women entrepreneurs versus urban women entrepreneurs can be studied.

Also, studies to find out the sociocultural and economic class difference with different cultural backgrounds across nations can give interesting insights.

In this era of digitalization and globalization, even today the role of women is seen as that of a wife and a mother. A study based on changes in the perception can be conducted as we can see a change in the trend as more and more women are getting educated, girls getting exposure to professional and vocational education and their involvement in business and job is getting increased.

Knowing the barriers a woman face while starting her own venture like lack of basic commercial networks, unequal access to resources, funding and market entry; business models for women founded businesses can be developed.

## 16. Source of Funding

None.

## 17. Conflict of Interest

None.

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