

Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship Development

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ABSTRACT The present study aims to find the overall impact of entrepreneurship development on women's status and the extent to which an entrepreneur is empowered. The study was conducted in Vaishali district of Bihar. The ex post facto research design was used for the study. A total of 100 women entrepreneurs were randomly selected for the purpose from 4 out of the 16 blocks in the district. A survey schedule was developed for the collection of data, based on pre-testing. For measuring the extent of women's empowerment a set of three indicators—"level of mobility", "decision-making power", and "awareness and capacity building" consisting of different sub indicators was constructed. The data was analyzed statistically for frequency, percentage, correlation coefficient and multiple regressions. The findings revealed that there is a substantial improvement in overall status of women in the family. The empowerment index score for the indicator "level of mobility", of the majority of the respondents was in the medium to high category. The study concluded that as much as 64% of the respondents exhibited their extent of empowerment in medium category.

INTRODUCTION

A woman's status, very often, is deemed as an important indicator of the level of development of a particular society. The concept of human development has spurred it to make the development more people-oriented and thus a woman has become as much central to it as men. Former President of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said, "when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation". Women are the vital human resources and their empowerment - economic, educational, social and political—would hasten the pace of social development. Investing in women's 'capabilities' and empowering them to achieve their 'choices' and 'opportunities' is the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development (Puttnaik 2000). Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation.

One major therapy prescribed by women empowerment advocates is empowering women through entrepreneurship. It reflected a ray of hope for the unemployed to earn a living and

maintain a dignified life and also for the economic development of the country. Entrepreneurship is the best way of proper utilization of both human and non-human resources and improving the living condition of the poor masses (Singh Prabha 2009). Our vision of emerging as a superpower by 2020 will pivot momentarily on entrepreneurial shoulders. As a backbone to the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship development, issues of human capital development, succession of enterprise and continuity of the enterprise are crucial. Human capital development comes with increased managerial responsibilities, as the women are able to take on more roles in the running of the enterprise in view that women have been entrepreneurs for a long time and was innovative in terms of budgeting with the limited resources and utilizing waste material (Gikongo et al. 2006).

The global changes have created economic opportunities and women entrepreneurs have emerged as a distinct class so much so that their contribution to a nation's economy is now substantial. Depending on which nation is referred to, women entrepreneurs constitute 15% to 35% of all entrepreneurs of that nation's economy. In India too, women entrepreneurship development had come a long way since it was systematically initiated in 1979. It is estimated that presently women entrepreneurs comprise about 11% of the total entrepreneurs in India and it is expect-

ed to increase to 25% to 30% by 2020 (Singh Rashmi 2008).

The scenario where, an increasing number of women are seeking economic opportunity and self-determination through enterprise creation and are well prepared to grab the opportunities of the multi-polar world, would also have to face a number of challenges which are required to be solved by making them and their family aware, and attracting financial and moral support in this regard. This paper shifts focus onto the major challenges they face like dearth of financial assistance and lack of business skills, conflict between work and family and other social and psychological barriers, while they achieve their "choices" and "opportunities". Though it is perceived that the status of a woman is enhanced by economic independence it is not yet explained how it empowers women in the family and the society. A woman entrepreneur may be very powerful and efficient in an organization, but the situation at home may be different. This study aims to analyze whether economic participation does in fact translate into concrete women empowerment: a state where women are able to carve a niche for themselves, whether they enjoy the same status as their male partner or they are only means of additional financial support to the family beside being the home manager. The study is a tool to assess whether the entrepreneurship development among women has positive impact on reducing gender discrimination, or are they being exploited to their maximum potentialities in return of an illusion of a social status. Based on these perspectives the study was undertaken with the following specific objectives;

1. To assess overall impact of entrepreneurial activities on women's status.
2. To measure the extent of empowerment of women entrepreneurs.
3. To ascertain the relationship between selected socio-economic variables and extent of empowerment of women entrepreneurs

METHODOLOGY

The 'ex-post facto' research design was followed for the present investigation. The district Vaishali of Bihar was selected intentionally as the locale for the study. Out of the sixteen blocks in the district, four blocks namely, Hajipur, Bidupur, Mahua and Jandaha were selected ran-

domly. Twenty-five women entrepreneurs from each block were selected through a snowball technique and form a sample size of hundred respondents. The data was collected through a well-designed questionnaire schedule and analyzed statistically for frequency, percentage, correlation coefficients and multiple regressions.

For measuring the extent of women's empowerment, a methodological approach based on three different indicators was made. To develop the indicators of women's empowerment, different journals, books and reports were consulted. Finally a set of three indicators—"level of mobility", "decision-making power", and "awareness and capacity building" consisting of different sub indicators was constructed. Each of these was quantified on the basis of the nature of the responses.

1. Level of Mobility

The earlier research findings showed that in many cases the freedom of movement for the workingwomen is restricted (Kishore et al. 2004). The women are not allowed to go elsewhere alone and any delay from the place of work is often considered a violation of the norm. Under these circumstances women are not empowered even if employed. Hence, the variable takes into account the level of mobility of the women to judge whether they are empowered or not. It was measured on a three point continuum with scoring 2, 1 and 0 assigned respectively for, "Go alone", "Accompanied with husband/other" and "Not allowed".

2. Decision-Making Power

The power of decision-making is a real test of empowerment of a person (Bora and Saharia 2002). A women's decision-making power within her household was measured by the extent of her role in making decisions with respect to the different issues. The three point rating scale was developed with scores of 2, 1 and 0 assigned respectively for, "decide independently", "decide jointly with husband", and "decided by others".

3. Awareness and Capacity Building

Building awareness include raising individual and collective consciousness about women's condition in family and community through

mobilization of political and legal action. As Pamecha and Khatik (2005) stated that empowerment is not just a question of rearrangement of power, both economic and political, it is also a matter of change of values. Building capacity, further, refers to the abilities in undertaking economic, socio-cultural and political activities and enhancing self-respect. These include ownership and control of productive resources and creation of alternative employment of local levels, abilities to interact effectively in public sphere, ability to fight injustice, organize struggle etc.

In the present study, as the women entrepreneurs having the ownership and control of productive resources, equal share in family income so the variables become important to judge their capacity and ability to being empowered. The scoring 2, 1 and 0 were assigned for “Independently”, “With support of others” and “Not at all” respectively. Total scores obtained by a respondent was calculated in terms of empowerment index score as per the formula given below:

Empowerment index score = Total score obtained/ Maximum possible score x 100

Further, to know the overall extent of empowerment, the total scores obtained by the respondents were categorized into four levels-very low (empowerment index score of 0-25), low (empowerment index score of 25-50), medium (empowerment index score of 50-75), and high (empowerment index score of >75).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs

The empowerment of women entrepreneurs in terms of three indicators was measured. The findings of the investigations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Empowerment of women entrepreneurs

S. No.	Activities	Empowerment index score Members (n=100)			
		Very low (<25)	Low (26-50)	Medium (51-75)	High (>76)
1.	Level of mobility	-	24	44	32
2.	Decision making pwr	-	40	60	-
3.	Awareness & capacity building	-	84	16	-1

It is revealed from Table 1 that the empowerment index score for the indicator “level of mobility”, 32% respondents were in high category, which means their score was more than 75. Next, 44% of the respondents had an empowerment index score in the medium category and remaining 24% respondents were in the low category. It implied that the majority of the women entrepreneurs enjoyed medium to high level of mobility. For the indicator, “decision-making power”, for majority of the respondents (60%) the empowerment index score was in the medium category and empowerment index score of rest 40% respondents was in low category. The findings are similar to those by Upadhye (2012) who found a statistically significant relation between entrepreneurial venture and women autonomy in decision-making. In case of the third indicator, “awareness and capacity building”, majority of the respondents (84%) were in the low category whereas only 16% of the respondents were in medium category. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents enjoyed freedom of movement as their empowerment index score was maximum for the indicator “level of mobility” followed by “decision-making power”.

Extent of Empowerment for Women Entrepreneurs

Further, to know the extent of empowerment, the empowerment index scores of all the respondents were categorized into four levels. The findings are presented in Figure 1.

It can be observed in Figure 1 that empowerment index scores of 64% of the respondents were in medium category while empowerment index scores of only 5% of the respondents were in high category. It suggests that majority of the women entrepreneurs’ experiences improved social-ecosystems and positive attitude of their family and society. Rosa (2005) also concluded in her study conducted in three districts of Kerala

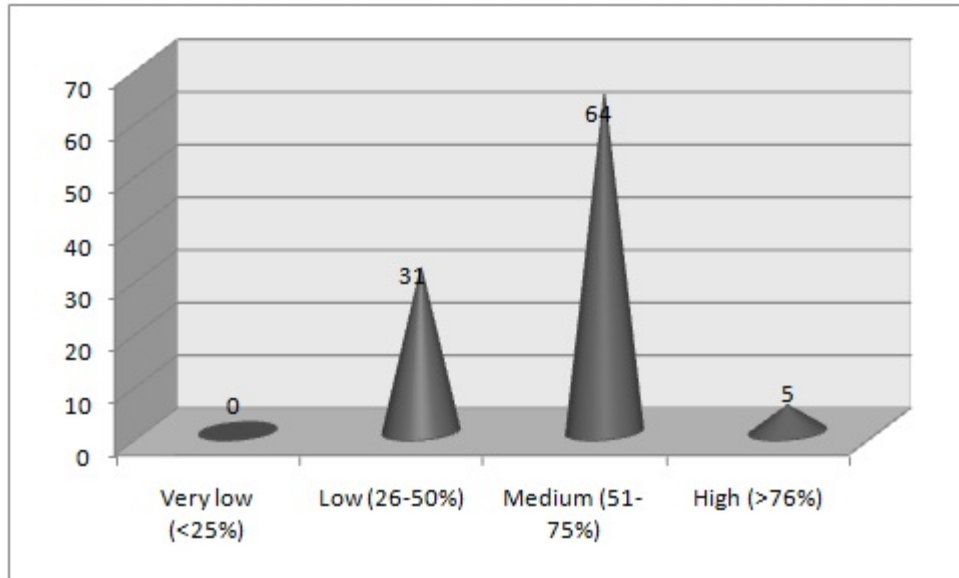


Fig. 1. Overall empowerment of women entrepreneurs

that among employed women, self-employed women enjoy highest empowerment in the family. Hence, more opportunities should be provided to women for self-employment.

Overall Impact of Entrepreneurial Activities on Women's Status

At the outset, impact of entrepreneurship development on the women's status was studied. The observations are recorded in Table 2.

Evidentially, there is certainly some positive effect on women status. A good improvement

was reported by 52% of women entrepreneurs in terms of increasing their reputation in the society while 8% reported substantial improvement in their reputation. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) reported that there is good improvement in decreasing interference of their husbands in their personal affairs as against 10% who reported substantial improvement. Substantial improvement in terms that of other female members get more freedom by 21% of the respondents, 12% of the respondents reported substantial improvement in terms of support of husband in their decision has increased. Again, a

Table 2: Overall impact of entrepreneurial activities on women's status

S. No.	Statement	Substantial improvement	Good improvement	Little improvement	Negligible improvement
1.	Reputation in the society has increased	8	52	12	28
2.	Interference of husband & other has decreased in personal affairs	10	48	24	14
3.	Other female member of family started to get more freedom	21	38	20	21
4.	Support of husband to decisions has increased	12	42	26	20
5.	Male/Female discrimination in family has decreased	15	40	35	10
6.	Diet and health has improved	8	32	40	20
7.	Consciousness against exploitation has increased in family	25	35	32	8

good improvement by 40% and substantial improvement by 15% respondents were reported in terms of decreasing male/female discrimination in their family. Further, 8% indicated that there was substantial improvement in their diet and health whereas a maximum of 25% respondents reported substantial improvement in terms of increasing consciousness against exploitation in their family.

Thus, it is obvious, that there are signs of improvement in various areas. However, substantial changes are still being seen only in a few areas. The majority is yet to grasp the entrepreneurial opportunities for their economic, social and psychological empowerment, but it can be concluded that there was an overall positive impact of participation in entrepreneurial activities on the women's status. As empowerment is a slow but continuous process, women have started assessing themselves leading to new kinds of situations in the society.

Relationship of Extent of Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs with Socio-economic Variables

To know the exact association of the socio-economic variables of the women entrepreneurs and that of their extent of empowerment, the data was subjected to statistical analysis like Pearson's correlation and multiple regressions. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship of empowerment of women entrepreneurs with socio-economic variables

S. No.	Independent variable	Extend of participation (Y2)
1.	Age	0.328**
2.	Caste	0.256**
3.	Eduction	0.209*
4.	Occupation of husband	0.360**
5.	Own and family income	0.280**
6.	Social participation	0.473**
7.	Cosmopolitics	0.295**
8.	Communication and means of transport	0.544**
9.	House type	0.011 ^{NS}
10.	Facility at home	0.365**
11.	Family size	0.327**
12.	Material possession	0.311**
13.	Enterprrie	0.035 ^{NS}
14.	Constraint in empowerment	0.301**
15.	Participation	0.253*

* Significant at 5% level of probability.

**Significant at 1% level of probability

NS: Non-significant.

Table 3 shows that variable viz.: age, occupation of husband, own and family income, social participation, cosmopolites, communication and means of transport, facility at home, family size, material possession and constraints in empowerment were found to be positively and significantly correlated at 1% level of probability whereas caste, education and participation in entrepreneurial activities was positively and significantly correlated with empowerment at 5% level of probability. It is clear that at a higher level of education women entrepreneurs had more empowerment. Similarly, when they belong to upper castes and are of a higher age group they were likely to be more empowered. The other variables—house type and enterprise, were not found to be correlated significantly with empowerment of women entrepreneurs. The result indicated that variables viz.; age, occupation of husband, own and family income, social participation, cosmopolites, communication and means of transport, facility at home, family size, material possession and constraint are relevant in determining extent of empowerment. The relevance of other variables caste, education and participation was at 5 percent level of probability in determining empowerment. The finding indicates that empowerment of women entrepreneurs was positively associated with 13 variables except house type and enterprise.

It was interesting though encouraging knowing that the respondents who participated more actively in their entrepreneurial venture and were subjected to face more constraints had a tendency to be more empowered. Sen and Baltimore (2000) viewed that empowerment brings greater self-confidence and increased capability to overcome barriers to resource access as well as implementing the changing ideology that is, changing role of women in education, income and participation in the labor force.

The result presented in Table 4 revealed that out of the 14 variables which were subjected to analysis, only three variables that is occupation of husband, social participation and communication and means of transport were found to be significant contributors towards the extent of empowerment of women entrepreneurs. The t-value was found statistically significant in these cases. These three variables emerged as powerful predictors as indicated by high magnitude of standardized regression coefficients.

Table 4: Relative contribution of selected socio-economic variables towards extent of empowerment of women entrepreneurs

S. Independent	Regression coefficient	Standard error	t-value
1. Age	0.449	0.095	0.761
2. Caste	0.697	1.305	0.391
3. Education	0.688	0.746	0.403
4. Occupation of husband	0.004	1.33	2.957
5. Own and family income	0.696	1.108	0.392
6. Social participation	0.011	0.536	2.585*
7. Cosmopolitics	0.882	0.169	0.148
8. Communication and means of transport	0.029	0.51	2.225*
9. House type	0.002	1.267	-3.248*
10. Facility at home	0.795	0.293	0.261
11. Family size	0.52	0.967	0.647
12. Material possession	0.355	0.127	0.929
13. Enterprise	0.497	0.59	-0.682
14. Constraint	0.882	0.33	0.149

* Significant at 5% level of probability.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that majority of the women entrepreneurs enjoyed medium to high level of mobility, authorized to medium level of decision-making but their awareness and capacity building for empowerment was at a low level. Overall they exhibit medium level of empowerment. The study showed the overall positive impact of entrepreneurship on women's status.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rural women can do wonders by their effectual and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities. The rural women have basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprises. Now, what is the need is knowledge regarding accessibility to loans, various funding agencies procedure regarding certifications, awareness on government welfare programs, motivation, technical skill and support from family, government and other organizations. Further, the formation and strengthening of rural women entrepreneurs' network must be encouraged. Women entrepreneur networks are the major sources of knowledge about women's entrepreneurship and they

are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for its development and promotion. Women entrepreneurs need to be lauded for their increased utilization of modern technology, increased investments, finding a niche in the export market, creating a sizable employment for others and setting the trend for other women entrepreneurs in the organized sector.

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