

**WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT:
CASE STUDY OF OWNERS OF THE BEAUTY PARLORS
IN HYDERABAD SINDH**

Dr.Noor Muhammad Jamali

Dr.Ashique Ali Jhatial

Dr.Rizwana Chang

ABSTRACT

This paper is based on empirical evidence collected through thirty in-depth interviews of female entrepreneurs involved in the beauty parlor business in Hyderabad, Sindh. This study investigated: (a) degree to which women entrepreneurs see themselves empowered in deciding regarding recruitment, procurement, marketing, financing and other administrative affairs of their enterprise or do their male-family members play any role and (b) the extent women entrepreneurs have access to their profits and how do they manage risk factors. Study also examined whether demographic factors such as family background, education level, domicile and size of enterprises are indicative to the success and failure of women enterprise. Findings reveal vast majority of women entrepreneurs are empowered in decision making on routine administrative affairs like recruitment and procurement. However, due to socio-cultural factors, they seek assistance of their male family members on marketing and finance issues. Study also identifies majority of women entrepreneurs utilize profits of their business for themselves. Also, a comfortable majority suggested they financially support their family and pay for health and education of their children. In the last, study discusses implication of findings for further research and management of women entrepreneurship in the country.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurship, empowerment, beauty parlors, Hyderabad, Sindh

INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973 in its Article 18 prescribes the right of its citizens to enter upon any lawful profession or occupation and to conduct any lawful trade or business. Likewise, Article 25 lays down the right to equality before the law and prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of sex alone. These two articles of constitution of the nation

conspicuously lay down the very foundation for women to enter into any employment or start up any lawful business. Constitution- a supreme law protects women rights and any forms of discrimination against them. Women empowerment and entrepreneurship has been centre of attention in Pakistan for last couple of decades. Successive governments have initiated legal, administrative and financial such as The First Women Bank Ltd to promote women entrepreneurship (WE) and empowerment. Women empowerment can be defined as ‘capability of women to transform economic and social or entrepreneurial opportunity for other women within their communities decisively’. This definition contains three main aspects such as: (a) sense of self worth; (b) rights to have a power of control their own lives at home and outside; (c) capability to influence the decisions that affect their social and economic wellbeing. By the term, economic empowerment means to empower women economically by giving her rights of properties, lands, financial responsibilities, and entrepreneurship and job opportunities. Also, women should enjoy equal social status to that of man at home with equal liberty and freedom in deciding about marriage, education, job and starting up entrepreneurship of their choice. Women have assumed greater role in socio-economic development of the country. Women now appear to have participation in employment, management, entrepreneurship and investment in Pakistan.

Women seem to have keen interest in the fields of architecture, lawyers, financial services, engineering, IT, medical nursing and beautician, politics, social work, teaching, to name a few. The rapid pace of economic development has increased the demand for educated female labor force almost in all fields. Women are earning as much as their husbands do, their employment nonetheless adds substantially to family and gives family an economic advantage over the family with only one breadwinner. Hence, they are taking more personal decisions, for instance, about their further education, marriage, etc. More and more women want freedom of work and control their own reproduction, freedom of mobility and freedom to define one’s own style of life. It is contended that freedom leads to greater openness, generosity and tolerance.

More recently, Ahmed & Naimat (2011) investigated the circumstances of WEs in Pakistani context and revealed that networking plays a vital role in motivating and enhancing women participation in entrepreneurship. They acknowledged WEs in Pakistan focus more on SMEs sector. Authors also suggested that it will be worth investigating to see how networking could enable female entrepreneurs to overcome social, cultural, legal, and religious barriers faced by women in Pakistan.

The review of extant literature indicates that women across the cultures face numerous socioeconomic, familial, financial, managerial, marketing and logistics problems. Female entrepreneurs in Pakistan equally face various challenges such as government rules and regulations, lack of access to finance, assets, information technology, infrastructure and other facilities that enable their efficiency and business growth (UN, 2006). Consequently, this study addressed major research questions as to what extent women entrepreneurs e.g. beauty parlors in Hyderabad, Sindh see themselves empowered in deciding regarding recruitment, procurement, marketing, financing and on other administrative affairs of their enterprise or do their male-family members play any role and the extent women entrepreneurs have access to their savings and how do they manage loss/risk factors. Study also examined whether demographic factors such as family background, education level, domicile and size of enterprises are indicative to the success and failure of women enterprise.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An increasing body of entrepreneurship literature has continuously focused on women entrepreneurship (hereafter referred as WE) as means of women empowerment and women's poverty reduction (Lavoie, 1985). Business functions like financial, administrative and social responsibilities including discharge of daily management are undertaken by themselves (Buttner & Moore 1997). Chu (2000) defined WE as an enterprise either owned or managed and inherited or newly established with or without family members.

Researchers identified different socio-political and personal elements that influence WE. Amongst personal factors include

personality, ability to face the challenges and work experience. Socio-economic elements such as social, economic, political, religious and financial factors are significant (Goheer, 2003). According to Shapero (1975) entrepreneurship is kind of behavior that includes initiative taking, reorganizing economic activities and the acceptance of its risks. Sue *et.al.*, (2000) suggested entrepreneurial behavior is influenced by genetic power, family background and economic environment. Woman entrepreneurs in male-dominated societies especially in Asia and Africa confront problems (Schaefer, 2003).

Similar evidence was reported that women in developing and conservative societies face up to lack of opportunities, unjust culture, beliefs and overbearing influence of a male domination which largely stops them to grow independent businesses (Salleh, Hassan & Osman 2007). Study presented a typology of inspired and motivated women entrepreneurs which distinguished women according to their goal orientation. Okafor & Amula (2010) investigated relationship between WEs motivation and challenges women entrepreneurs may face. They also highlighted some practical implications for policy makers both in the government and women entrepreneurs. Sanyang & Haung, (2008) studied success stories women entrepreneurs in Taiwan by presenting difficulties and problems in their way. Study also revealed that Taiwanese women still need government help and access to finance for business growth. Teoh & Chong (2007) examined the influencing factors and performance of women entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Study suggested that it is imperative to investigate to use social, psychological and organizational approaches to explore and analyze the relationship between women's characteristics and associated factors such as parental influence, their business management, strategies, goals and motives, networking and entrepreneurial orientation towards their business performance. Makinde & Adetayo (2004) identified stories of WE in Nigeria. Authors discussed various government policies implemented to promote women entrepreneurship. However, study also suggested some bottlenecks of implementation process and gender discrimination. Kantor (1999) precisely suggested that women being opposite gender experience increasing number of socio-economic, cultural and religious constraints as compared to

businessmen. Consequentially, this limits their ability to take advantage of the opportunities available to them which may cause their failure in business.

Some other studies of Mayoux (2001) and UN (2006) investigated causes of success and failure in WE and identified that poor financial management e.g. books of records, lack of ready cash, managerial experience and skills, sales and marketing problems, staffing, the failure to seek expert advice, limited social and business networks, a low level of demand in the local economy and lack of role models. Other barriers to WE development may include cultural obstacles, lack of motivation, high crime rates and problems during the transition from reliance on government benefits and employment.

Empirical evidence on female entrepreneurship literature appeared in late 1970s and women entered in corporate life in the United States and Europe. Chusmir & *et.al.*, (1990) suggested that the psychology literature inundated with nearly two-thirds of the studies related to gender issues in organizations with focus on women at work. Carter, Anderson & Shaw (2001) investigated the extant literature on the women entrepreneurship with especial focus on demographic characteristics, motivations of women in business and their business ownership experiences. They reported huge literature focused on cumulative knowledge of women entrepreneurs. The study of female entrepreneurship is still in its early stages and numerous researchers have noted the lack of a robust research stream (Baker, Aldrich & Liou, 1997; Carter, Anderson & Shaw, 2001; Terjesen, 2004). From 1976-2001, about a ninety per cent research based literature related to female entrepreneurship found in entrepreneurship journals was of an empirical nature (Greene *et.al.*, 2003).

Some investigations have focused on the success stories of male and female enterprises and traced factors that contribute to the success and failure of the enterprise. Sabarwal & Terrell (2008) provide evidence of contradictory findings related to gender differences and attribute some differences to data classifications. On the contrary, Chaganti & Parasuraman (1996), identified that female-owned businesses perform equally good like firms owned by males in terms of job growth. Nevertheless, Bosma *et.al.*, (2004) found significant different associated with male and female

enterprises and found male-owned firms do better than female-owned businesses. Fischer, Reuber & Dyke (1993) identified factors that such as training, motivation and experience help WE grow.

A most recent study contributed on the subject of women entrepreneurship in Pakistan by Ahmed & Naimat (2011) emphasized on the importance of networking for the promotion of WEs in Pakistan. Authors reiterated that social, cultural, legal, and religious are serious and major impediments in the way of WE and that the forces of patriarchy manipulate their professional role and create stumbling blocks for women's career development motives Shabbir (1996), Shaheed (1990) and Shah (1986). Nevertheless, the study reveals that young women have capability to recognize opportunity and also get engaged in networking to smooth their way out. According to Goheer (2003) WE in Pakistan concentrate in retail, industrialized business and service sector. The service sector is dominant and focus remains in education, healthcare, beauticians and garment (Goheer, 2002). Another crucial problem for WE slow growth in developing countries including Pakistan is attributed to the lack of women mobility, uneducated and rude mostly rude and rough male workforce that is not ready to accept the authority of women (Goheer, 2003). Additionally, socio-cultural norms and values support patriarchal societal structure and roles based on gender. This is a critical omission from the understanding of women's entrepreneurship, because the social compositions, work, family, and planned social life differ broadly in rising economies (Allen & Truman, 1993; Aldrich *et.al.*, 1989). In developing countries, mainstream literature, has missed out this aspect which creates academic and research gap.

Literature review for this study suggests that most of the research on the subject has been undertaken in different country contexts excluding beauty parlor business in Sindh, Pakistan. In Pakistan 60 percent women are operating traditional business that is beauty parlors, boutiques, bakeries, schools etc. Research undertaken such as Shapero & Sokol, (1982) and Sexton & Vasper (1982) revealed that most women whilst facing challenges experience frustration, job dissatisfaction, deployment, unrest in family, not being able to put attention to children, quitting the business. Other important factors that motivate women and lead

them to entrepreneurial success include independence, autonomy, financial support, education and family security could help WE grow faster. A careful review of the literature published in Pakistan on the subject of women entrepreneurship explicitly indicates that there are few studies available for review such as Goheer (2002, 2003) and Ahmed & Naimat (2011). As a result, it is hard to make academic guess or draw conclusions. Against this backdrop, this study contributed empirical evidence on 'women entrepreneurship and empowerment by employing case study of beauty parlor business in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan.

RESEARCH METHODS

Thirty in-depth interviews were conducted from owners of beauty parlors in Hyderabad. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. Interviews were conducted in native language and got them translated from an expert of language translation. Due to cultural barriers that males are not involved in the beauty salon business and it is considered a sensitive in nature researchers were not allowed in person to conduct interviews. Rather, owners suggested they would allow only female interviewers. As a result, two prominent local women journalists were contracted to conduct interviews for this study. Before interviews they were provided necessary briefing and training about the objectives of research. All interviews were tap recorded and translated and transcribed for further analysis. Subsequently, thematic analytical strategy was employed for data analysis. This technique is very common in qualitative research. Thematic analysis is a system of organizing data and analyzing that step by step. In first phase of thematic analysis researcher begins to develop potential codes followed by generation of initial codes and prepare a list of items with recurring patterns in the data. Later, the researcher further fragments data into labels in order to generate categories for a suitable analysis. At this stage the researcher makes inference about the meanings of the codes. Coding at this stage helps in development, alteration and re-conceptualization of the data and increases the possibilities for analysis. Researcher is able to describe what the themes mean. In the third phase the codes are merged into overreaching themes that depict the data precisely. With a list of themes the researcher begins to focus on broader

patterns in the data, combining coded data with anticipated themes. The relationship between codes and themes is also formed. In the fourth stage, the researcher examines the themes as to how they support the data and the theoretical perspective. The review of the themes helps the researcher to see if the data supports or refutes the proposed theory. At this stage further extension or alteration of the themes may also take place. In the fifth stage, researcher constructs a comprehensive review analysis of the themes which contribute in comprehending the data. The existing themes help the researcher in the final analysis by defining and refining the themes. In the last stage, when the themes have been thoroughly reviewed and revised, the process of reporting and interpreting the data takes place. Thematic analysis is reported in order to present the complicated data in a manner that should convince the reader of the validity and merit of the analysis. In the light of above discussed stage-wise framework following interpretation is presented.

Demographic Information

Table 1 presents personal details of the participants. The vast majority of about 73 percent interviewed age was between 46 to 60 years and 27 percent female participants' age was about 36 and 45 years. These findings indicate that women in beauty parlor business are in the middle of age. Over 60 percent participant reported having university education and suggested they have recently established enterprise. About similar percent of participants reported they have over 12 female employees which indicates that WE is getting stronger and more women are interested in the business and generates employment for females. A very significant finding of this study is that about 90 percent of women interviewed belong to the urban area of the province where this business seems more popular than in rural areas.

TABLE: 1
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographics	Specifications	Number of participant	Percent
Age group	25 to 35 years	00	00
	36 to 45 years	08	27
	46 to 60 years	22	73
Number of years in business	Less than 10 years	17	66
	11 to 20 years	08	27
	21 years and above	05	17
Education	University degree	19	63
	Intermediate	06	20
	Matriculation	05	17
	No formal education	00	00
Domicile	Urban	27	90
	Rural	03	10
Size of enterprise	Less than 10 employees	10	34
	from 11 to 20	17	66
	From 21 to 30	03	10

IMPORTANT FINDINGS

Empowerment at Work: The main research question of this study was about the degree of empowerment in entrepreneurial decision-making. Most of the participants responded that they have employed trained and senior beauticians. It was highlighted that due to high demand and huge variety of the services of beauty salon, most of the beauticians get short courses and training certificates from Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and European countries. One female whose beauty salon was very famous in the town said:

“I have about 13 beauticians. Eight females of them are educated and trained from foreign. They have introduced many state of the art services that no other parlor offers. This has given us an edge and indeed our business has grown further. I have been in the business when I was only 22 years of age, my aunt asked me to do this business after my university graduation. Since then I have been doing beauty salon. I use to decide in assistance of my senior colleague regarding recruitment, procurement and marketing decisions. I do not seek much assistance from my husband or any other male family member. I do this business and I know better

than my male family members. Because of my business, I have earned a good name in my family and all my relatives show respect to me and my relatives as well as other females seek and respect my suggestions”.

In contrast to above quote, one female owner sounded much different by saying that:

“I had very tough time in my business since beginning. I had to confront two major challenges one at my business and one at my home. I belong to very traditional and tribal family wherein work or job for females is not good omen. Even it is recent past that male family members have allowed female to go to university yet it is a big challenge for females to do job or business. This town is not a big market as a result there is cut-throat competition. Those who provide better quality service at competitive price survive. There are some very good reputed salons and they do better as they have foreign qualified staff and modern services to offer. Due to my familial circumstances, I do not have social networking that plays significant role in the success of the business. Social networking is considered important for hunting talented staff and they bring customers along with them which good for business”.

Entrepreneurial decisions one of the women by themselves is very significant finding of this study. This also suggests that those women who do business are more empowered and they do their decision making by independently. Findings of the study reveal that vast majority of women entrepreneurs are empowered in decision-making on routine administrative affairs like recruitment and procurement. However, due to socio-cultural factors, some women do seek assistance of their male family members on marketing and finance issues. However, involvement of male-family member is not necessary such help is only required of unavoidable. Most of the females have networking which facilitates them in decisions regarding recruitment and procurement. However, some females also highlighted having tougher competition with those of the already established beauty salons. One owner expressed that it is the service that is

fundamental to the success of the enterprise. Once a customer has been served very well and satisfied then not only she would remain attached to the parlor but might publicize the enterprise service and others will get attracted too.

Empowerment at home:

In order to gauge the liberty of women in business they were asked about the role in decision-making at home. Participants were especially asked do you think your entering in business has enhanced your role in the family decisions. And, to what extent they have access to their entrepreneurial savings. One entrepreneur expressed as:

“I supported my husband in purchase of home and pay tuition fees of our children in school education. My husband is very big source of support to me and always encourage. My business has enhanced my visibility at home and I feel more independence than before in monetary affairs as well as I see my important role at home for my children education and their career”.

These findings are in line with that of Robert Blood (1965) who observed that women employment emancipates them from domination by their husbands and they could raise their daughters from inferiority to their brothers’ (Blood & Wolfe, 1965). In brief, economic independence of women is changing their overall equations, perspective and outlook. Women in entrepreneurs feel more confident and decide either independently or take part in decisions regarding marriage and education of themselves and children. With increasing literacy in women and their interest in entrepreneurship they seem to have equal status with their male counterparts and play significant role in family life. In spite of many socio-economic and cultural bottlenecks and drawbacks that still prevail, women in entrepreneurship seem more empowered and no longer hesitant to claim visibility in family by participating in decision-making.

On the contrary, some female entrepreneurs’ experience different challenges regularly at work. Some of the women participants interviewed for this study agreed that familial problems. Most of the problems that were frequently expressed

include: limited degree of independence from male family members for choosing to do decisions about the business, autonomy to decide on expansion of business and investing more money and using savings. Findings indicate that family support is yet one of the big problems for female entrepreneurs. Some other frequently problems discussed by the participants were lack of relevant education and training available in the country, age, work history, relative experience, looking after children, family members, traditional feministic roles, environment of the family, relative and society are the source of de-motivation. Similar evidence has also been reported Kjeldsen & Nielson (2000); Parboteeach (2000); Bird (1988) and Jones (2000) in different country contexts. Previous research also suggested that women entrepreneurs' desire to achieve personal goals, to feed one's family, to be respected, earning pride of ownership, peer pressure, desire for social recognition are also source of motivation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the rights of women against any discrimination in any sphere of life. The constitution is sought inspiration from Islamic injunctions to protect women right of speech, inheritance, education and deciding about their future. Urban in contrast to rural women experience plenty of education, job and entrepreneurial opportunities. Urban women in large majority get education in comparatively good schools and universities, find work side by side with men or start up their own business. Although, women at work face up socio-cultural barriers of conservative mindset of male-dominated society, yet, there are positive signs of women being active in the sphere of seeking education, doing job or running their own business. Government needs to initiate legal and administrative frameworks that may provide protection to women in job and business. Legal and administrative frameworks should focus on providing life, business protected along with financial and technical assistance with the aim to strengthen the process of socio-economic development and empowerment of the disadvantaged sections of the society at the grassroots level through transfer of knowledge. NGOs could provide on policy makers towards women issues for empowering them with equal opportunities. Women entrepreneurship in

Pakistan will act as a catalyst for reducing the social dependency of women. It will increase their access to education, health facilities, and employment opportunities through which they can assume greater control over their own lives.

Findings of this study reveal that women engaged in business feel more empowered and confident in entrepreneurial and domestic decisions. They are more independent as they earn, save and utilize saving for their business, personal and family. Women in business have more social, political, economic and educational awareness and generate employment opportunities for other females. Consequently, female labor participation grows and it also adds to the middle class that affords education and health expenses. Women interviewed also shared their feelings that they are aware of the issues related to gender including sexual harassment, violence against women, and labor exploitation of women in Pakistan. Most of the participants revealed that their domestic life is settled and they do face up domestic violence or gender discrimination as they belong to educated families. One female expressed that her customers include educated class such as female lawyers, NGO officials, women rights and political activists. As a result, her staff members are well-aware of the issues of gender discrimination, social justice and women empowerment in the society.

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