

A STUDY ON PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN KANNIYAKUMARI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT:

Women entrepreneurs play a vital role in economic development, making significant contributions to employment generation and innovation. Despite their potential, they face numerous challenges that hinder their growth. The sample size was 120. The primary data were analysed using percentages, mean rank, and ANOVA. This paper explores the problems faced by women entrepreneurs in Kanniyakumari district and the opportunities available to them. It also provides suggestions for fostering a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, problem, Economic Development, Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

A women entrepreneur is a woman who initiates, organizes and manages a business venture, taking on financial risks in the hope of making a profit. Women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economic growth, job creation, and innovation by establishing and running businesses across various industries, including manufacturing, retail, services, agriculture and technology.

In recent years, the number of women entrepreneurs has increased due to better access to education, financial support schemes, and digital platforms that enable business operations beyond geographical boundaries. However, despite their growing presence in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, women still face unique challenges such as societal norms, gender biases, financial constraints and difficulties in balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

Many governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have introduced initiatives to support women entrepreneurs through training programs, subsidies, and mentorship opportunities. The rise of women-led startups and home-based businesses has also empowered many women to become financially independent and contribute to their families and communities. By overcoming these obstacles and leveraging available opportunities, women entrepreneurs can play a transformative role in shaping the economic and social fabric of a nation

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth and development. Women entrepreneurs, in particular, contribute to social transformation by creating job opportunities and fostering innovation. Women-owned businesses not only enhance economic diversification but also contribute to poverty reduction and community development. The participation of women in entrepreneurship helps in achieving gender equality by promoting financial independence and leadership roles.

However, despite their growing presence, women entrepreneurs face multiple barriers that hinder their business success. These obstacles include financial constraints, lack of access to resources, socio-cultural limitations, and regulatory challenges. Kanniyakumari district, known for its diverse economic activities including tourism, agriculture, and small-scale industries, presents both challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs. The district has a significant number of women engaged in self-employment and micro-enterprises, but many still struggle to scale their businesses due to a lack of institutional support and market access.

Recognizing these challenges, this paper aims to explore the problems and prospects for women entrepreneurs in Kanniyakumari district. It provides an in-depth analysis of the key issues faced by women entrepreneurs, examines existing support systems and suggests policy measures to enhance their participation in business activities. By identifying both the barriers and opportunities, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment

PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Financial Constraints

One of the major challenges for women entrepreneurs is securing financial support. Many financial institutions perceive women-led businesses as high-risk, making it difficult for them to obtain loans and credit. Additionally, a lack of collateral, limited financial literacy, and dependence on family income further restrict their access to capital. Women often rely on self-financing or informal loans, which may not be sufficient for business expansion.

Societal and Cultural Barriers

In many societies, women are still expected to prioritize household responsibilities over professional aspirations. Traditional gender roles discourage women from taking entrepreneurial risks, and in some cases, they face resistance from family members who do not support their business ventures. This lack of encouragement can lower their confidence and limit their willingness to take risks.

Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Women entrepreneurs often struggle to maintain a balance between business operations and family obligations. Unlike men, who may have fewer domestic responsibilities, women are expected to manage childcare, household chores, and family commitments, which can lead to time constraints and stress. This imbalance prevents many women from fully dedicating themselves to business growth.

Lack of Entrepreneurial Skills and Training

Many women lack formal business education and training in financial management, marketing, and strategic planning. This knowledge gap affects their ability to compete in the market and make informed business decisions. The unavailability of mentorship programs and limited networking opportunities further restrict their exposure to industry trends and innovative practices.

Legal and Regulatory Challenges

Women entrepreneurs often face difficulties in navigating complex business regulations and legal formalities. Many are unaware of government schemes, tax benefits, and business registration procedures, which delays their business setup process. Additionally, gender bias in legal institutions sometimes discourages women from pursuing business disputes or seeking legal protection.

Market Access and Competition

Breaking into competitive industries can be tough for women entrepreneurs, as they often lack industry connections and brand recognition. Limited access to business networks, supply chains, and marketing platforms makes it difficult for them to promote their products and services effectively. Additionally, male-dominated industries may not be welcoming to women entrepreneurs, creating additional barriers to entry.

PROSPECTS FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Government Support and Schemes

Recognizing the need to promote women entrepreneurship, governments worldwide are introducing various financial schemes, grants, and incentives specifically designed for women-led businesses. Initiatives such as MUDRA loans, Stand-Up India, and other subsidies encourage more women to enter the entrepreneurial ecosystem. By simplifying loan application procedures and offering lower interest rates, these schemes provide a strong foundation for aspiring women entrepreneurs.

Technological Advancements

The rapid growth of digital technology has opened up new opportunities for women entrepreneurs. E-commerce platforms, digital payment systems, and social media marketing have enabled women to start and expand their businesses with minimal investment. Online businesses, especially in sectors such as fashion, beauty, and handmade crafts, have become highly successful due to the accessibility of global markets.

Increasing Awareness and Education

More women are now pursuing business education and skill development programs, which has increased their confidence and business acumen. Many institutions and NGOs are offering training in areas such as financial literacy, business planning, leadership, and digital marketing. As women gain more knowledge and skills, they are better equipped to overcome challenges and grow their businesses successfully.

Changing Societal Attitudes

There has been a significant shift in societal attitudes towards women entrepreneurs. More families, communities, and investors are beginning to recognize the importance of women in

business. Women entrepreneurs are increasingly receiving support from business networks, investment groups, and mentorship programs, allowing them to grow and sustain their ventures in a competitive market.

Globalization and Emerging Markets

With the rise of globalization, women entrepreneurs now have access to international markets. Many women-led businesses are taking advantage of export opportunities, digital trade, and business collaborations with international partners. Sectors such as handicrafts, organic products, sustainable fashion, and wellness industries have seen significant growth due to increasing global demand.

Women-Centric Networking and Support Systems

There has been a rise in women entrepreneur associations and support groups that provide mentorship, funding assistance, and professional networking opportunities. Organizations like the Women Entrepreneurs Association, FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been instrumental in encouraging women to become financially independent and economically empowered. These networks help women connect with investors, mentors, and like-minded entrepreneurs.

REVIEWS

Several studies have examined the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in India. Research by Sharma (2020) highlights financial constraints as a major hurdle for women entrepreneurs. Another study by Rao (2018) emphasizes the importance of skill development and training programs. Additionally, Bhatia & Gupta (2019) discuss socio-cultural barriers and their impact on women's participation in entrepreneurship. This study builds on existing research by focusing on Kanniyakumari district and providing localized insights.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite various government initiatives and policy measures, women entrepreneurs in Kanniyakumari district continue to face significant challenges, including financial constraints, lack of access to markets and socio-cultural barriers. There is a need for a comprehensive study to identify the specific problems faced by women entrepreneurs in this region and explore potential solutions for their empowerment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Kanniyakumari district.
- To examine the government policies and schemes available for women entrepreneurs.
- To explore opportunities and future prospects for women entrepreneurs.
- To provide suggestions for improving women's participation in entrepreneurship.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on women entrepreneurs operating in Kanniyakumari district. It covers various business sectors, including small-scale industries, retail businesses, and service enterprises. The study aims to assess financial, social, and regulatory challenges while also highlighting emerging opportunities. Findings from this study will be useful for policymakers, financial institutions and NGOs working towards women's economic empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary and secondary data. The sample respondents were selected from women entrepreneurs through convenience sampling. The sample size was 120. The primary data were collected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed with the help of percentage, mean rank and ANOVA. The secondary data were gathered from journals, books, and websites. Based on the findings the suggestions and conclusions were drawn.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

- The present study is confined to the problem of women entrepreneurs.
- The study is limited to a sample size of 120 only.
- Some of the information given by the respondents hesitated to give the data.
- There may be biased opinions given by the respondents.

Data Analysis and Discussion:

The demographic characteristics of respondents are one of the important variables to identify the women entrepreneurs in Kanniyakumari district. Demographic profiles of the respondents were classified according to their age, marital status, educational qualification, annual income, business types, size of the business, source of financing, and spend business income.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

| S. No. | Particulars | | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|--------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1. | Marital Status | Married | 92 | 76.67 |
| | | Unmarried | 28 | 23.33 |
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |
| 2. | Area of Residence | Rural | 42 | 35 |
| | | Semi-urban | 56 | 46.67 |
| | | Urban | 22 | 18.33 |
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |
| 2. | Age | Below 30 years | 24 | 20 |
| | | 31 years to 40 years | 60 | 50 |
| | | 41 years to 50 years | 22 | 18.33 |
| | | Above 50 years | 14 | 11.67 |
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |
| 3. | | Illiterate | 8 | 6.67 |

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|----------------------|-----|-------|
| | Education Qualification | Primary | 10 | 8.33 |
| | | SSLC | 24 | 20 |
| | | HSC | 38 | 31.67 |
| | | Graduates | 28 | 23.33 |
| | | Others | 12 | 10 |
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |
| 1. | Family monthly income | Below ₹ 10,000 | 12 | 10 |
| | | ₹ 10,001 to ₹ 20,000 | 24 | 20 |
| | | ₹ 20,001 to ₹ 30,000 | 54 | 45 |
| | | Above ₹ 30,000 | 30 | 25 |
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |
| 1. | Business types | Manufacturing | 42 | 35 |
| | | Trading | 34 | 28.33 |
| | | Service | 30 | 25 |
| | | Others | 14 | 11.67 |
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |
| 6. | Source of financing | Family income | 64 | 53.33 |
| | | Personal savings | 30 | 25 |
| | | Loan from bank | 20 | 16.67 |
| | | Other source | 6 | 5 |

| | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-------|
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |
| 7. | Spend business income | Family expenses | 60 | 50 |
| | | Personal savings | 26 | 21.67 |
| | | Re investment in her business | 34 | 28.33 |
| | | Total | 120 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 indicates that 76.67 per cent of the respondents are married. Most of the sample respondents are living in semi-urban areas. 50 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 31 to 40 years. 31.67 per cent of the sample respondents studied up to Higher Secondary School (HSC). 45 per cent of the respondents earning income between ₹ 20,000 to ₹30,000. 35 per cent of the respondents are doing manufacturing business. 53.33 per cent of the respondents are mobilizing funds from family income. 50 per cent of the respondents are using business income for family expenses It is clearly understood that the majority of the respondents are married so getting income from business is a support to run their family.

PROBLEM FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among family monthly income with respect to problems faced by women entrepreneurs.

Table 2

ANOVA for family monthly income with respect to problems faced by women entrepreneurs

| S. No | Statements | Monthly income | | | | | | F value | P-value |
|-------|------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|------|---------|---------|
| | | Below ₹10,000 | ₹10,001 to ₹20,000 | ₹20,001 to ₹30,000 | Above ₹30,000 | Average Mean | Rank | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|------|------|------|------|------|----|------------|-------------|
| 1. | Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities | 3.50 | 2.75 | 3.21 | 4.17 | 3.16 | V | 7.085 | 0.000 ** |
| 2. | Financial Constraints | 3.50 | 2.83 | 3.26 | 4.08 | 3.17 | IV | 5.573 | 0.002 ** |
| 3. | Societal and Cultural Barriers | 3.50 | 2.91 | 3.63 | 4.47 | 3.38 | II | 9.229 | 0.000 ** |
| 4. | Lack of Entrepreneurial Skills and Training | 3.50 | 2.66 | 3.10 | 4.17 | 3.11 | XI | 12.57 2 | 0.000 ** |
| 5. | Legal and Regulatory Challenges | 2.57 | 3.00 | 3.42 | 4.17 | 3.72 | I | 6.357 | 0.001 ** |
| 6. | Market Access and Competition | 3.50 | 2.75 | 3.15 | 4.08 | 3.12 | X | 7.519 | 0.000 ** |

Source: Computed Data

Regarding the problem of the sample respondents in different family monthly income, the significant difference, below ₹10,000, ₹10,001 to ₹20,000, ₹20,001 to ₹30,000 and above ₹30,000 have been identified in case of all the variables, since their respective F statistics are significant at 1 per cent. It is observed that family income is directly related to problems faced by women entrepreneurs because most of the sample respondents used to amount get from their family income only.

SUGGESTIONS

- Access to finance should be improved through simplified loan procedures and low-interest credit facilities.

- Training programs in business management, marketing, and financial literacy should be expanded.
- Government policies should be more inclusive, reducing bureaucratic barriers for women entrepreneurs.
- Awareness campaigns should encourage societal acceptance of women in business.
- Women entrepreneurs should have better access to networking and mentorship programs.
- Digital platforms and e-commerce opportunities should be leveraged to support women-led businesses.

CONCLUSION

While women entrepreneurs in Kanniyakumari district face significant challenges, various opportunities exist to support their growth. Governments, financial institutions, and society must work together to create a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Policies should focus on financial inclusion, skill development, and mentorship programs to empower women entrepreneurs in Kanniyakumari district. By addressing these challenges and leveraging available opportunities, women entrepreneurs can significantly contribute to economic and social development in the region.

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