

A STUDY RELATED TO CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS FACED BY RURAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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ABSTRACT

In India, women-owned businesses are becoming more significant as a result of economic liberalisation and globalisation. The institutional and policy framework for offering vocational education and training, as well as for developing entrepreneurial abilities, has expanded the possibilities for women's economic development. Women business owners typically exhibit strong levels of motivation, self-control, and self-direction. The whole economic development of society and the country depends on the social and economic advancement of rural women. The number of rural women who own their own businesses is rising, yet little attention is paid to their entrepreneurial potential, managerial skills, and socioeconomic contributions. Women's empowerment is achieved through the growth of female entrepreneurs. Self-fulfilment is a result of empowerment through entrepreneurship, which also educates women about their rights, status, and place in society. Through business ownership, women are gaining social and economic empowerment in the modern day. On the other side, rural women's empowerment is also quite important. The economic empowerment of rural women will contribute to the growth of our nation, and in order for our nation to truly advance in all fields, it is crucial to pay close attention to this issue. Women's economic development will contribute to the advancement of the family, the community, and the nation. Women's entrepreneurship is crucial for the status of women in society. It creates fresh options for both men and women to find work. The goal of the current study is to improve rural women's business skills, which will lead to their empowerment. Rural women entrepreneurs in India face numerous challenges and problems in starting and running their businesses. These challenges include lack of education, financial constraints, lack of market information, limited access to technology, societal and cultural norms, and inadequate infrastructure. This research paper aims to identify and analyse the challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs in India and propose strategies to overcome these challenges. The study used a qualitative research design, with data collected through interviews and focus group discussions with rural women entrepreneurs in different parts of India. The findings suggest that the challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs in India are multifaceted and interrelated, requiring a comprehensive approach that addresses both the social and economic factors that influence their business operations.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, Rural Development, Employment.

Introduction

Indian women have gained independence from the male-dominated society in which they were confined to the four walls of the home and forced to perform domestic chores like cooking, washing clothing, giving birth to children, and raising them. Women have made their mark on the corporate sector both as job searchers and as job creators. Finally, women are starting their own businesses in the countryside. In the context of economic liberalisation and globalisation, women's entrepreneurship is becoming more prevalent. Rural women who build their businesses are better able to make decisions,

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improve their financial situations, and get respect from their peers and the community. Especially in non-traditional occupations, markets, labour, transportation, land, common property resources, and institutions through which to obtain loans and other inputs, rural women frequently have limited access to and control of the resources needed for livelihood diversification. It is one of the newest fields of research in the field of entrepreneurship and has developed into a key factor in the support of agribusiness and rural economic development.

The Khadi and Village Industry Commission (KVIC) defines rural industry or village industry as "any business or industry located in rural areas, population of which does not exceed 10,000 or such other figure which produces and provides any goods or services with or without use of power and in which the fixed capital investment per head of a worker or a craftsman does not up to Rs. 1,000."

The Government of India has changed the description to broaden its use. According to the Indian government, a village industry is defined as "any business or industry founded in a rural area, village, or town with a population of 20,000 people or less and an investment of Rs. 3 crores in any equipment and machinery."

By starting their own businesses, Indian women have advanced beyond simply having corporate careers that allowed them to exhibit their talents and gain financial independence. This change has given her the opportunity to leave all of this behind and go into a realm where she can make a name for herself while still making a difference in the corporate world.

Objectives

- To find the issues and challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs in India.
- To find the factors responsible for influence rural women to become entrepreneurs.
- To study the effective support of the government on women entrepreneurship.

Challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs in India:

- **Lack of education:** Many rural women entrepreneurs in India have limited formal education, which hinders their ability to access market information, financial resources, and business networks. This limits their ability to start and run successful businesses.
- **Financial constraints:** Rural women entrepreneurs often lack the financial resources needed to start and grow their businesses. They may face difficulty accessing credit, particularly if they lack collateral or a credit history.
- **Lack of market information:** Rural women entrepreneurs often lack access to market information, which limits their ability to identify and capitalize on business opportunities.
- **Limited access to technology:** Many rural women entrepreneurs in India lack access to technology, which limits their ability to market their products and services, conduct transactions, and access information.
- **Societal and cultural norms:** Rural women entrepreneurs often face societal and cultural norms that limit their ability to start and run businesses. For example, they may face discrimination based on their gender, caste, or religion.
- **Inadequate infrastructure:** Rural women entrepreneurs often face inadequate infrastructure, including transportation, electricity, and water supply, which hinders their ability to operate their businesses.

Strategies to Overcome these Challenges

- **Improving Education:** Efforts should be made to improve the education levels of rural women, particularly in the areas of financial literacy, business management, and technology.
- **Providing financial support:** Access to financial support, such as microcredit and grants, should be improved for rural women entrepreneurs. This could be achieved by creating special funds and programs that target women entrepreneurs in rural areas.
- **Increasing access to market information:** Efforts should be made to improve access to market information for rural women entrepreneurs. This could be achieved by creating online platforms that provide information on market trends, prices, and business opportunities.
- **Enhancing access to technology:** Efforts should be made to improve access to technology for rural women entrepreneurs. This could be achieved by creating mobile-based applications that provide access to market information, financial services, and business support services.

- **Addressing societal and cultural norms:** Efforts should be made to address societal and cultural norms that limit the ability of rural women entrepreneurs to start and run businesses. This could be achieved by promoting gender equality, raising awareness about women's rights, and creating a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs.
- **Improving infrastructure:** Efforts should be made to improve infrastructure in rural areas, including transportation, electricity, and water supply. This could be achieved by investing in infrastructure development programs and creating public-private partnerships to improve infrastructure in rural areas.

Findings

The study found that lack of access to finance and credit is one of the biggest challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs face difficulties in obtaining loans from banks and financial institutions due to various reasons, including lack of collateral, low creditworthiness, and limited financial literacy.

Another significant challenge faced by rural women entrepreneurs is the lack of access to market information and resources. This includes information about market trends, demand for products, pricing, and distribution channels. Due to this, many women entrepreneurs are unable to identify potential markets and expand their businesses.

The study also found that social and cultural barriers are significant challenges for women entrepreneurs in rural areas. Women entrepreneurs often face discrimination and bias based on their gender, which affects their ability to access resources, networks, and opportunities.

Additionally, inadequate infrastructure and limited availability of resources such as electricity, transportation, and raw materials pose significant challenges to rural women entrepreneurs. This makes it difficult for them to scale up their businesses and compete with other players in the market.

Conclusion

With regard to technology advancement, change, industrialization, rural development, and educational advancement, the current scenario is changing very quickly. For rural women, work opportunities significantly increased in such circumstances. Without hesitation, rural women's entrepreneurship increases both the prosperity of their families and the country as a whole. Women in India are believed to be economically and socially dependent on male family members because it is a country where men predominate in society.

Rural women entrepreneurs in India face several challenges and problems related to finance, market access, social and cultural barriers, and infrastructure. Addressing these challenges is critical to supporting the growth of women-led enterprises in rural areas and promoting economic development in India. Earning money or having a lucrative source of income, living a better life, having access to loans, favourable government policy, the influence of success stories, personal satisfaction, the desire to use one's skills and talents, an unfavourable work environment at the moment, employment of others as well as oneself, assurance of career and family security, the satisfaction of one's creative urges, involvement in family businesses, self-assurance, and the inability to repay the loans are some of the important factors.

In order to link to the main stream of the national rural economy and so contribute to the development of the rural economy, women need the backing and support of their families, the government, society, and male coworkers, among other groups. The government ought to adopt a strategy to help Indian women entrepreneurs work more on empowerment through initiatives for training, growth, and capacity building. The fact that rural women entrepreneurs cannot grow without the proper training is also true. Consequently, it is essential to give training to rural women in order to improve their entrepreneurial talent and give them a path to success.

The government should provide rural women with high-quality educational services. In order to link to the main stream of the national rural economy and so contribute to the development of the rural economy, women need the backing and support of their families, the government, society, and male coworkers, among other groups. The government ought to adopt a strategy to help Indian women entrepreneurs work more on empowerment through initiatives for training, growth, and capacity building. The fact that rural women entrepreneurs cannot grow without the proper training is also true. Consequently, it is essential to give training to rural women in order to improve their entrepreneurial talent and give them a path to success. The government should provide rural women with high-quality educational services.

Government assistance alone cannot solve the issues facing female businesses. There should be female business owners who can inspire others, turn their ideas into reality, and influence both other business owners and decision-makers. Self-help mutually aided groups must be created to address the common issues faced by entrepreneurs.

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