

Problems Faced by Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Kandi Area of Punjab

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurs represent a group of women who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation. Among the reasons for women to turn to entrepreneurship include skill, knowledge, talents, abilities, and creativity in business and a compelling desire of wanting to do something positive. It is high time that countries should rise to the challenge and create more support systems for encouraging greater entrepreneurship amongst women. At the same time, it is up to women to break away from stereotyped mindsets. Keeping this in mind, the present study was undertaken with an objective to study the problems of the rural women entrepreneurs in Balachaur block of Nawanshahr District of Punjab. A sample of 28 women entrepreneurs was selected. The interview method was used to collect data from these women. Information on the entrepreneurial problems was gathered and analyzed. The results of the study revealed the major problems faced by women entrepreneurs (when they ventured out to carve their own niche in this tradition bound society called Kandi area of Punjab) were as follows : Personal (51%), socio-psychological (41%), technical (51%), financial (24%), production related (18%), and marketing (16%). Most of the problems faced by women were of personal, technical and socio-psychological nature. Thus, it was concluded that rural women possess the necessary characteristics and have the needed potential for running their homes and agro based micro enterprises successfully. However, the pre-requisites to their entrepreneurial growth include education, skill based training, and infrastructural support together with the provision of credit facilities.

Keywords: problems, agro and home based enterprises, socio-psychological, entrepreneur, entrepreneurship

JEL Classification : L26, M13, O17

Paper Submission Date : October 10, 2013 ; **Paper sent back for Revision :** December 26, 2013 ; **Paper Acceptance Date :** January 11, 2014

Entrepreneurship development of women holds the key to India's future prosperity to which our government is committed. In a country like India, it is indeed a herculean task to develop capacities of women for entrepreneurship. However, modern small scale industries have emerged as a breeding ground for growth of women entrepreneurs. Lately, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of self employed women. They are making an impact in all segments of our economy, breaking away from the beaten path, and are exploring new vistas of economic participation. In this environment of opportunities galore, they are also facing stiff competition and series of problems right from the startup stage till the running of their enterprises. Gender bias and inequality too are playing a crucial role in multiplying the problems of women entrepreneurs.

Rural women, in particular, are suffering all the more as they face an arduous routine and stiff resistance from men folk. Besides, rural society is still largely tradition bound where women follow multifarious routine which is drudgery prone, time intensive, repetitive, and remunerative. Thus, the attitude of society towards their work and the constraints within which they live and work are not at all conducive for their growth as entrepreneurs. There

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are numerous and unique problems the rural women are facing owing to their locational peculiarities, socioeconomic conditions, and other area specific factors which need to be studied and addressed in order to enable women to contribute significantly to the socioeconomic progress of the nation. The present study is, therefore, focused to provide the needed insights on women entrepreneurship related problems.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the problems of women entrepreneurs in Balachaur block of Nawanshahr district of Punjab,
- To elicit suggestions regarding the perceived remedial measures to solve the problems of the women entrepreneurs.

Research Methodology

➤ **Locale of the Study:** The study was conducted purposively in Balachaur block (Kandi area) of Nawanshahr district of Punjab. This area is situated in the North-East of the state and constitutes 10% of the area of the state. People here are poor, tradition bound, and are little exposed to latest technologies. Nearly 45% of the men go out to nearby towns for casual labour. Consequently, women are primarily responsible for cultivation and collecting fuel and fodder. Because of their intimate relationship with agriculture and animal husbandry operations, small agro and home based enterprises are more suitable for these women.

➤ **Selection of the Sample:** Selection of the sample (micro and small enterprises) was governed by the criteria that it should be a small undertaking run by a woman, who as a proprietor takes up the responsibility of managing the venture with the support of her family. The list of enterprises was obtained from the District Industrial Centre (DIC), Nawanshahr. This facilitated the investigator to select those small agro and home based small enterprises that were being run by women for the last (atleast) 3 years with an investment of upto 5 lacs in the selected block of Balachaur of District Nawanshahr. There were only 28 entrepreneurial units which eventually met the criteria in the selected block. Based on the selected list of 28 entrepreneurial units, all the concerned 28 women entrepreneurs were selected for data collection.

➤ **Construction of the Research Instrument:** An interview schedule containing statements on perceived

Table 1. Personal Problems Experienced by Women Entrepreneurs

S. No.	Problems	N =28				Mean Score
		Yes		No		
		F	%age	F	%age	
1	Over burdened with responsibilities	28	100.00	0	-	1.00
2	Health problems due to drudgery prone routine	8	28.57	20	71.43	0.29
3	Excessive stress and tension of dual responsibilities	26	92.86	2	7.14	0.93
4	Lack of time for recreation	27	96.43	1	3.57	0.96
5	Inability to handle managerial tasks	1	3.57	27	96.43	0.04
6	Lack of confidence	2	7.14	26	92.86	0.07
7	Poor risk taking capacity	12	42.86	16	57.14	0.43
8	Lack of ability to plan ahead	3	10.71	25	89.29	0.11
9	Emotional immaturity	21	75.00	7	25.00	0.75
Overall Average		51.00				0.51

F ratio= 42.81

CD (5%)= 0.1740

Table 2. Production Related Problems Faced by the Women Entrepreneurs**N = 28**

S. No.	Problems	Yes		No		Mean Score
		F	%age	F	%age	
1	Power and water shortage	5	17.86	23	82.14	0.18
2	Lack of skilled labour	1	3.57	27	96.43	0.04
3	Maintenance problem	4	14.29	24	85.71	0.14
4	Inadequate infrastructural support	6	21.43	22	78.57	0.21
5	Non availability of raw material	1	3.57	27	96.43	0.04
6	Non availability of machinery or equipment	1	3.57	27	96.43	0.04
7	High cost of production	10	35.71	18	64.29	0.36
8	Low productivity as compared to other enterprises	13	46.43	15	53.57	0.46

F -ratio= 5.51

CD (5%) = 0.1367

problems of women entrepreneurs regarding home and agro based enterprises was prepared. Suggestions were also solicited for suitable strategies to be adopted to minimize problems in this respect.

➤ **Pre-Testing of the Research Instrument:** Before commencing the data collection work, the interview schedule was pre-tested on seven non sampled micro level women managed home and agro based enterprises. On the basis of results of this pre-test, the necessary modifications were made in the interview schedule before administering it on the sampled respondents.

➤ **Collection of Data:** The data was collected by directly interviewing the respondents with the help of the prepared interview schedule. Extra care was taken to get accurate responses from the respondents.

➤ **Analysis of Data:** The data were analyzed with the help of statistical tools, that is, frequency, percentage, mean score, cumulative frequency cube-root method, and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results and Discussion

The data in the Table 1 shows that 100% of the entrepreneurs faced the problem of being over-burdened with responsibilities. A high percentage faced the problem of lack of time for recreational activities (96.43%), excessive stress and tension of dual responsibility (92.86 %), and emotional immaturity (75%). Further, 46.86 % had the problem of poor risk taking capacity and 28.75% faced health problems due to drudgerous routine. A negligible percentage faced the problems of lack of ability to plan ahead (10.71%), lack of confidence (7.14%), and lack of ability to handle managerial tasks (3.57 %). On the basis of overall average, it can be inferred that 51% of the women entrepreneurs experienced personal problems. *F*-ratio calculated on the basis of overall mean scores showed that there is a significant difference between different types of personal problems faced by women entrepreneurs at the 5% level of significance. These results are in conformity with the results obtained by Sharma (1996) that the main constraints faced by women entrepreneurs were excessive burden of work and lack of confidence about management.

The Table 2 depicts that 46.43% of the entrepreneurs expressed agreement with the problem of low productivity of their units as compared to other enterprises, 35.71% experienced the problem of high cost of production, and 21.43 % reportedly faced the problem of inadequate infrastructural support. Other production related problems included power and water shortage (17.86%) and maintenance problems faced by 14.29% of the entrepreneurs. Lack of skilled labour, non availability of raw material, and non-availability of machinery or

Table 3. Marketing Related Problems Faced by the Women Entrepreneurs

						<i>N</i> =28
S. No.	Problems	Yes		No		Mean Score
		<i>F</i>	%age	<i>F</i>	%age	
1	Lack of access to market information	28	100.00	0	-	1.00
2	Inadequate road linkages	8	28.57	20	71.43	0.29
3	High transportation cost	26	92.86	2	7.14	0.93
4	Low seasonal demand	27	96.43	1	3.57	0.96
5	Intensive market competition	1	3.57	27	96.43	0.04
6	Continuous change in demand pattern	2	7.14	26	92.86	0.07
Overall average		16.07				0.16

F ratio= 3.16

CD (5%)= 0.1244

Table 4. Socio- Psychological Problems Faced by the Women Entrepreneurs

						<i>N</i> =28
S. No.	Problems	Yes		No		Mean Score
		<i>F</i>	%age	<i>F</i>	%age	
1	Lack of achievement motivation	6	21.43	22	78.57	0.21
2	Lack of encouragement to women entrepreneurs from society	2	7.14	26	92.86	0.07
3	Conflicts due to dual responsibility	27	96.43	1	3.57	0.96
4	Lack of freedom to work independently	27	96.43	1	3.57	0.96
5	Lack of social acceptance to women entrepreneurship	1	3.57	27	96.43	0.04
6	Male dominance and chauvinism	5	17.86	23	82.14	0.18
7	Lack of social contacts	13	46.43	15	53.57	0.46
Overall average		41.33				0.41

F ratio= 31.67

CD (5%)= 0.1408

equipment were the problems faced by 3.57 % of the respondents each. On an average, 18 % of the women entrepreneurs faced problems related to production aspect of their units. The *F*-ratio indicated that all the stated production related problems were significantly different at 5 % level of significance. These results are also supported by the results obtained by Jayammal (2012) that women entrepreneurs faced inadequate availability of land, plots, and premises; irregular supply of enough inputs; inadequate technical support of production identification; and lack of upgradation of technology research and development; and quality control and poor inventory management.

The Table 3 reveals that 28.57% of the entrepreneurs faced the problem of inadequate road linkages, 25 % faced the problem of intensive market competition, 14.29% faced the problem of continuous change in demand pattern. Problems of high transportation cost and lack of access to market information were faced by 10.71% and 3.57% of the respondents respectively. On an average, 16% of the respondents faced marketing related problems. *F*-ratio indicated that there was a significant difference between all types of marketing related problems at the 5 % level of significance. This study is in line with Jayammal (2012) that women entrepreneurs faced difficulty in marketing their products due to lack of suitable knowledge of how to market their products and also due to reliance on local markets, heavy competition from big enterprises, exploitation by middlemen, difficulties in the collection of dues, inadequate sales promotion avenues, and lack of export market support. Mallikarjunaiah and Sudarsan (2012) found that fishermen of Andhra Pradesh encountered the same problems, that is, lack of

Table 5. Technical Problems Faced by the Women Entrepreneurs Owning Micro and Small Enterprises**N = 28**

S. No.	Problems	Yes		No		Mean Score
		F	%age	F	%age	
1	Lack of avenues for training	12	42.86	16	57.14	0.43
2	Lack of knowledge regarding institutions working for women entrepreneurship	23	82.14	5	17.86	0.82
3	Available improved technology	9	32.14	19	67.86	0.32
4	Loaning schemes and procedure of financial institutions	16	57.14	12	42.86	0.57
5	Different advanced technologies	11	39.29	17	60.71	0.39
Overall average		51.00				0.51

F-ratio = 16.21

CD (5%)= 0.2369

Table 6. Financial Problems Faced by the Women Entrepreneurs**N = 28**

S. No.	Problems	Yes		No		Mean Score
		F	%age	F	%age	
1	Lack of personal funds	14	50.00	14	50.00	0.50
2	Lack of experience in financial matters	2	7.14	26	92.86	0.07
3	Lack of financial support from various organization govt./non-govt.	7	25.00	21	75.00	0.25
4	Lengthy procedures for obtaining loans	7	25.00	21	75.00	0.25
5	Lack of adequate credit facilities from financial institutions	4	14.29	24	85.71	0.14
Overall average		24.00				0.24

F-ratio= 4.38

CD(5%)= 0.2179

awareness of market information and imbalance between demand and supply of fish.

The Table 4 reveals that 96.43% of the women entrepreneurs faced the problem of conflict due to dual responsibility and also the problem of lack of freedom to work independently. Further, 46.43% reported lack of social contacts and 21.43% expressed lack of achievement motivation. Other socio-psychological problems experienced included male dominance and chauvinism (17.86%), lack of encouragement to women entrepreneurs from the society (7.14%), and lack of social acceptance (3.57%). The overall percentage for socio-psychological problems experienced by the rural women was 41%. Difference between all types of socio-psychological problems was found to be significant at the 5 % level of significance. This was also supported by Rao (2002) who reported male domination, unwritten rules of society, and family responsibilities as social problems faced by women entrepreneurs.

The Table 5 reveals that 82.14% of the entrepreneurs faced the problem of lack of knowledge regarding institutions working for women empowerment. The problem of lack of knowledge regarding loaning schemes and procedures of financial institutions was faced by 57.14% of the respondents; while 42.86% reported lack of avenues for training as a problem. The problems of lack of knowledge regarding different advanced technologies and available improved technology were reportedly experienced by 39.29% and 32.14 % of the respondents respectively. The overall average of this category of problems was 51%. The calculated *F*-ratio indicated significant difference between all technical problems. This is in conformity with Rani's (1996) observation that the crucial problems faced by women entrepreneurs were lack of knowledge about various improved techniques, delay in getting loans and raw materials, and tendency of experienced workers to leave the unit after gaining

Table 7. Comparative Mean Scores of Different Types of Problems Faced by the Women Entrepreneurs

<i>N</i> =28			
S. No.	Problems	Mean Score	Percentage
1	Personal problems	0.51	51
2	Production related problems	0.18	18
3	Marketing related problems	0.16	16
4	Socio-psychological problems	0.41	41
5	Technical problems	0.51	51
6	Financial problems	0.24	24
Overall weighted average		0.34	34

F-ratio= 2.06

P-value= non significant

Table 8. Experience Based Solutions to Problems Suggested by the Women Entrepreneurs

<i>N</i> =28			
S. No.	Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
1	Establishment of training institutes for rural women	22	78.6
2	Knowledge empowerment through training	22	78.6
3	Skill empowerment through training	24	85.7
4	Empowering with awareness regarding different development oriented schemes	21	75.0
5	Provision of funds for women empowerment through different Govt./Non- Govt. organizations	20	71.4

sufficient exposure. Jayammal (2012) also reported inadequate availability of land, plots, and premises; irregular supply of enough inputs, inadequate technical support of production identification, and lack of upgradation of technology research, development and quality control; and poor inventory management as production related problems that women entrepreneurs faced.

Data in the Table 6 depicts that 50% of the respondents faced the problem of lack of personal funds, 25% faced the problem of lack of financial support from various Govt./Non-Govt. organizations, and also faced the problem of following lengthy procedures for obtaining loans. Besides, lack of adequate credit facilities from financial institutions and lack of experience in financial matters were reportedly the problems experienced by 14.29 % and 7.14% of the respondents respectively. On an average, the financial problems were faced by 24% of the entrepreneurs. The calculated *F*-ratio revealed significant differences between all types of financial problems experienced by the respondents. These findings are supported by Zend and Muradi (1997), who showed that the major problems faced by women entrepreneurs were lack of finance and facilities from the government.

Data in the Table 7 reveals that personal and technical problems were reportedly faced by 51% of the women entrepreneurs, socio-psychological problems were faced by 41% of the respondents, financial problems were faced by 24% of the respondents, production related problems were faced by 18% of the respondents, and marketing problems were faced by 16% of the women entrepreneurs. The *F*-ratio indicated non-significant difference between all categories of entrepreneurial problems and on the basis of overall weighted average, 34% of the women entrepreneurs faced all types of problems listed above.

The results obtained by this study are in line with the results obtained by Jayammal (2012) and Maniar (1999) that majority of the women faced problems related to finance, raw materials, marketing, family and gender bias. Rao (2002) also showed that women entrepreneurs faced socio- personal problems, lack of family and community support, production related problems in the form of availability of land, plots and premises, lack of knowledge about marketing the products, and financial problems regarding loan and subsidy ; problems related to inadequate government assistance were also reported. Vatharkar (2012) examined the problems faced by

women entrepreneurs and reported that they faced problems while trying to start-up an enterprise as well as at the operating stage - like, role conflict, lack of motivation, lack of finance, difficulty in maintaining balance between work and family life, discriminating treatment, understanding government rules and regulations, and so forth.

The respondents were asked to offer their suggestions for overcoming the problems confronted by them. The responses obtained were varied and wide; therefore, they were suitably categorized and coded into five categories. The data pertaining to their responses is presented in the Table 8. Majority of the respondents (78.6 %) felt that there should be separate training institutions to train women entrepreneurs. They further suggested that these institutes should focus on knowledge empowerment (78.6%) and skill empowerment (85.7%) for equipping them better for running their enterprises successfully. The other suggestions forwarded by majority of the respondents included empowering them with awareness regarding different development oriented schemes (75%) and provision of funds for women empowerment through different GOs and NGOs (71.4%).

Managerial Implications

The findings of this research have some interesting implications for future practitioners and researchers whose aim is to study women entrepreneurs in general. It is very important for the policy makers to realize that they cannot design programs considering women in isolation as there are too many factors which influence their decisions. It becomes essential for the supporting organizations, especially financial institutions to make its schemes and procedures more customer friendly, and encourage more and more women to avail facilities from the banks.

Conclusion

The present probe into the problems led to the conclusion that though rural women are endowed with requisite traits and needed potential to run entrepreneurial ventures, but they require technical know-how, skills training, and infrastructural support together with the provision of credit facilities for better productivity performance and profitability. Therefore, extension trainers must play a proactive role in building capacities of rural women entrepreneurs through need based training for initiating, implementing, and sustaining different agro based and home based enterprises. It is also recommended that women entrepreneurs be supported through the provision of managerial training that emphasizes the need to strategize and execute the chosen strategy. The Central and State Governments should initiate policy measures to address the relative disadvantages faced by women entrepreneurs and address the obstacles faced by them at specific intervals or whenever needed.

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