Women Empowerment Through Micro-Enterprises A Selective Study

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Abstract: Women’s empowerment can be well paying strategy for overall economic and social development throughout the Globe. Empowerment of women means making women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-confidence to face any difficult situation. Entrepreneurship development among women is an activity that promises encouraging results. The present study is an attempt to study the socioeconomic background of the women entrepreneurs and to assess the role of micro-enterprises in the empowerment of women in terms of economic, social and psychological spheres in Ongole, Prakasam District of A.P. It is concluded that women are economically, socially and psychologically empowered after starting the micro-enterprises. Finally, suggestions are given for the promotion of women micro-enterprises.

Keywords: -Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Micro-enterprises, Socioeconomic, Suggestions.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Women Empowerment

Empowerment is central to the issue of equality, liberation and justice. The dictionary meaning of empowerment refers, to give power or authority, and to enable or permit. According to Kahlen (2004), empowerment is concerned with power, particularly power relations, distribution of power between individuals and groups.

Kabeer (2005) perceives empowerment as the expansion of ability of people to make strategic life choices in a situation where such an ability was denied to them. Amita (2006) expresses a similar view. The author sees Empowerment as a means to let woman live their own life in a way they think appropriate on the basis of their conditions, family circumstances, qualities and capabilities of which they themselves are the best judges. Demand for empowering is not a demand for equality or superiority; it is the demand to let them realize their own true self which shouldn't be denied to them on any basis whatsoever, anywhere, anytime and anyplace.

In the words of former President A P J Abdul Kalam, “Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured”.

Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation.

Aparajita (2006), who felt that empowerment of women may be taken to mean strengthening women's position in socio-political power structure of the society. Empowerment in this sense cannot be achieved without strengthening women's position in the existing economic system, which means creating both more social opportunities and capacities for women so that they can participate in effective and significant manner in the functioning of the economic system of the society.

Achala (2009), holds the view that the ability to direct and control ones own life is empowerment. It is a process of enhancing human capabilities to expand choices and opportunities so that each person can lead a life of respect and value. Sherly and Lavanya (2012), states that empowerment gives power to women in various spheres to have control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and ideology, greater self-confidence that enables one to overcome any problems. Empowerment of women is critical not only for their own welfare but also for the development of their family and community at large.

According to Jaya and Binod (2013), empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, greater decision- making power and control over transformative action.

In a nutshell, empowerment refers to giving power to individuals in all spheres of life which are essential for the survival and overall development of the mankind. Empowerment of women means equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities and in the process of decision making.

It has been globally recognized that women’s empowerment can be well paying strategy for overall economic and social development. This has resulted insignificant changes in the approach to assist, women in a continuum ranging from welfare to development. Entrepreneurship development among women is one activity that promises encouraging results.
1.2 Emergence of Women As Entrepreneurs

The more emphasis on developing women entrepreneurs by a country, the higher the status and position of women, that results in better living for families. The greater emphasis on the development and promotion of local entrepreneurs as well as the larger the spread of economic power among the people of a country. More employment opportunities in rural areas, availability of more local products and services are the result of local micro enterprises.

1.2.1 Micro-Enterprises

Since the word „Micro represents „small, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Act (MSMED) Act, 2006 defines it as the enterprise engaged in the manufacturing or production of goods, whose investment in plant and machinery does not exceed Rs. 25 lakh, and enterprise in providing or rendering services, whose investment in equipment does not exceed Rs. 10 lakh. Micro-enterprises are those industrial and business undertakings where owners, individuals, friends or relatives supply capital; they operate locally, and the size of business as well as management is small.

Small manufacturing and service enterprises such as brick kiln industry, stone crushing industry, bakery, steel fabrication, cane and bamboo, washing soaps, food products, beauty parlors, tailoring and embroidery, jewelry designing, supari processing are some of the examples of micro enterprises.

In India it is now recognized that development planning has to concentrate on generation of more employment, as it is the only effective way of poverty alleviation, reduction of inequality and meaningful growth (Kamalakannan, 2006).

The unemployment problem in rural India, involving 70% of the Indian labor force, can never be solved by industrialization and globalization. The answer to this problem lies only in the creation of massive number of jobs where rural Indians can be gainfully employed. Such jobs can become a reality only if small business and micro enterprises emerge intensively all over India (Santana and Jegadeesan, 2008).

Rural microenterprises ensure value edition to rural resources in rural areas engaging largely rural human resources. The basic rationale of developing microenterprises is that they provide additional employment opportunities and ensure more equitable distribution of income and better standard of living to the rural inhabitants. Global experience shows that the development of rural microenterprises is one of the most cost- effective ways of creating employment, scattering the industry, catalyzing research and development and allowing entrepreneurial talent to prosper (Dipanjan and Ratan, 2012).

1.2.2 Empowering Women Through Micro-Enterprises

Development of women enterprises is a global issue. It is important for economic growth and it is a growing phenomenon all over the globe. Rural women involvement in the economic development of the family and society at large is also a crucial issue that needs to enrich their families Women have been traditionally involved in micro enterprises, it is logical to focus micro enterprise development to ensure sustainability.

Sudan (2003), has highlighted the issues relating to empowering women through the development of micro enterprises via SHGs, in an article entitled “empowering women through micro enterprises development

The author has suggested that women SHGs should be financially integrated with mainstream rural credit to become self-sustainable. As a result, they continue to function even after the end of the programme.

Pragathy(2004), in her doctoral study, attempts to assess the empowerment of women through micro-enterprises in the Ranga Reddy District of AP. The study reveals that there is a slight improvement in the involvement of women in household decision-making in male-headed families with regard to credit, disposal of household assets, education of children and healthcare.

Chitra (2005), has conducted a study on 202 leaders of Self-Help Group members of Madhurai District in Tamil Nadu with a view to understand the impact of micro-enterprises on quality of life of the women which was measured in terms of their living standards. The author observed that most of the women in micro-enterprises wanted to reduce poverty and share their family responsibilities. The survey demonstrated that quality of life of the rural women had substantially increased which is the objective of the establishment of the micro-enterprises.

Pradeep and Poonam (2011), in their article argued that women are engaged in various farming activities, livestock management, post harvest and allied activities. The authors opined that the need of the hour is to empower them technically to cope with the changing times and productivity using their free time and existing skills for setting and sustaining enterprises. The study proposes that micro-enterprises could be an effective instrument of social and economic development and rural women posses abundant resources to take up enterprises”.

Sahab et al (2013), in their article have emphasized the role of micro-entrepreneurship in empowerment of rural women. The authors have stated that the women as members of SHGs are involved in micro-entrepreneurship and are becoming economically independent which in turn has led to development of family, community, society, state and nation. The authors have stressed the need to give keen of our
attention over empowerment of women in the rural area for the real development of our country in all spheres.

1.3 Discussion on Present Paper

Ongole is a city in Prakasam district of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. The city is a municipal corporation and the headquarters of Prakasam district. It is also the mandal headquarters of Ongole mandal in Ongole revenue division.

The city is the 13th most populous in the state. Ongole is located in the eastern portion of the Prakasam District at 15.5°N 80.05°E. It has an average elevation of 10 m (33 ft)AMSL. With the initiative of Mr. Ravuri Ling Reddy Ex Sarpanch, Pernamitta, Ongole has the all season water resource ‘Enugula Bavi’ which serves water needs of 40,000 people any time. Agriculture is the primary industry of Ongole, and is one of the major centres for tobacco trading in Andhra Pradesh.

During the 70s and 80s many small scale manufacturing enterprises dealing with shoes, paints, PVC and pharmaceuticals were prevalent but the vast majority did not survive competition from other parts of Andhra Pradesh and those out of state. The 80s and 90s saw a proliferation of hospitals and educational institutions.

As the 90s progressed businesses involving granite mining, cutting and polishing companies sprang up around Ongole. Chimakurthy, which is located in close proximity to Ongole is famous for its galaxy granite which has been a great income fetcher to the Government through royalty. This particular type of granite is exported to several nations like the U.S, China, Japan etc. The Granite industry led to good employment to both local and non-local labour.

1.3.1 Industries of Ongole:

Table-1: Industries of Ongole (As on 29-02-2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Types of Industry</th>
<th>No. of Units</th>
<th>Capital Investment (Rs. in Crores)</th>
<th>Employment No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Large Scale Industries</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6978.94</td>
<td>9517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Micro, Small &amp; Medium Industries</td>
<td>1615</td>
<td>294.27</td>
<td>11469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1628</td>
<td>7273.21</td>
<td>20986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: G. M, DIC, Prakasam DISTRICT

1.3.1 Understanding of Statistical Tests

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are:-

1. To assess the role of micro-enterprises in empowerment of women in terms of Economic, Social and Psychological spheres.

2. To explore the Motivating Factors for starting an Enterprise


III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature pursuing into the assessment of the role of microenterprises in the empowerment of women.

3.2 DATABASE

The data for this study have been collected both from primary and secondary sources.

Primary data was collected from 100 business women through a structured questioner. Personal interview method was used to get the required information with the aid of schedules.

Secondary data was collected from various sources like District Industries Centre (DIC) of Prakasam District, publications of Chief Planning Officer (Prakasam District), journals, periodicals, articles, books, reports, websites, etc.

3.3 SAMPLE DESIGN

The sampling frame for this study includes 149 women microenterprises registered in the District Industries Centre (DIC) of Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh. A sample of 107 are collected based on simple random sampling method wherein 100 sample elements are finalized (i.e.93.45 %). In the present study, empowerment of women is classified into three spheres namely economic, social and psychological aspects. It helped to explore the impact economic, social and psychological variables have on the empowerment of women. An assessment was done on the level of empowerment of women before and after the starting of micro-enterprises.

3.4 STATISTICAL TOOLS APPLIED

1. Percentage Analysis: Percentage analysis is applied on collected data

2. McNemar Test

McNemar’s test evaluates changes in related or paired binomial attributes, whether the changes in one direction is significantly greater than that in the opposite direction

McNemar's test assess the significance of the difference between two correlated proportions. on same data.

3.5 LIMITATIONS

The sample size was limited to 107 and the study is restricted to Ongole alone.

3.6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study shows that women have attained empowerment in economic, social and psychological
spheres after starting the micro – enterprises. It is proved not only in Ongole ,but in various districts & states.

1. Women entrepreneurs’ play an important role in local economies and a large percentage of micro-enterprises in developing countries are undertaken by women. (Tammi Raju, 2011)

2. Self Help Group (SHG) movement in Andhra Pradesh should be reoriented towards training women for starting micro-enterprises by providing prompt and needed amount of loans. (Rao, 2014)

3. micro enterprises lead to women empowerment and entrepreneurship and make them to wholly involve in income generating activities by choosing a own business venture. Women empowerment is very important for the acceleration of economic growth. (D.Arul, 2015)

3.6.1 PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>% of No of Respondents</th>
<th>Previous Occupation</th>
<th>% of No of Respondents</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>% of No of Respondents</th>
<th>Age-Wise</th>
<th>% of No of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Below 20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Women</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White collar jobs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Above 51</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table reveals that out of 100 sample respondents 55% of people are Married, 39% of people are Housewives, 33% are finished their Higher Secondary and 47% are at the age of 31-40.

3.6.2 MOTIVATING FACTORS TO START THE ENTERPRISE

The factors that motivated the respondents to take up entrepreneurship have been identified and presented in the above table. A majority 30% of sample respondents took up entrepreneurship for Family environment. While 15% sample respondents took up entrepreneurship because Government Incentives, Less educational background, self- earning and to lead an independent life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivating Factors</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family environment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize technical Know-how</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Incentives</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less educational background</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other alternative for income</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-earning &amp; Independence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire social status</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Recognition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-achievement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to do something new</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

3.6.3 MCNEMAR TEST

1. Economic empowerment of the sample respondents

H01: There is no significant change in the level of savings of women before and after starting the micro-enterprises.

Test Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Save Before &amp; Save After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>51.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the calculated p value, 0.001 <0.05 i.e.,0.001 , So the H01 can be rejected. Hence, it may be concluded that there is a significant change in the level of savings of women after starting the micro-enterprises.

2. Social empowerment of the sample respondents

H02: There is no significant change in the extent of household decision-making power of women before and after starting the micro-enterprises.
3. Psychological empowerment of the sample respondents

H03: There is no significant change in the level of self-confidence of women before and after starting the micro-enterprises.

Test Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DMBefore &amp; DMAfter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Squareb</td>
<td>37.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the calculated p value, 0.001 <0.05 i.e.,0.001 , the H03 can be rejected. Hence, it may be concluded that there is a significant change in the level of self-confidence of women after starting the micro-enterprises.

IV. FINDINGS

Before starting Enterprise the respondents of
1. 39% are -House wives
2. 33% are -finished their Higher Secondary
3. 47% are at the age of 31-40.
4. A majority 30% of sample respondents took up Entrepreneurship for Family environment.

V. SUGGESTIONS

The careful investigation of the present study shows that women have attained empowerment in economic, social and psychological spheres after starting the micro-enterprises. So, the following suggestions are given for the promotion of women micro-enterprises.

1. NGOs and government should come forward with awareness programmes exclusively for young women, and make efforts to diffuse information on prospects of entrepreneurship among the less educated women
2. Proper training for running the enterprises, maintaining accounts and marketing strategies are to be provided so that women get an opportunity to start micro-enterprises in their respective localities without upsetting their family life.
3. Less risky and small enterprises are suitable to larger section of women of India, particularly for rural India that should be taken into consideration at the time of organizing EDPs for women class.
4. Government should take initiative to organize large numbers of cooperative societies of women entrepreneurs.

VI. CONCLUSION

Micro enterprises develop and utilize entrepreneurial talent and potential of rural women below poverty line to meet the local needs. Survival and growth of these enterprises ensure better standards of living of all the participants and thereby their individual, family and social empowerment will be happy and joyful.

“To awaken the people, it is women, who must be awakened; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

REFERENCES


