

A Study of Problems and Prospects of Women Entrepreneurs during Covid-19 in India

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ABSTRACT

Today Entrepreneurship plays a major role in the development of country as well as society. Businesses were mainly carried by male entrepreneurs before last few decades. But now women has made step out of the boundaries of the house and contributing towards the growth and development of family as well as society. They are not only managing their houses but giving contribution to their occupation as well. In the male dominating world, women are walking with men in every sector of economy of the country. But still the conditions of women are not so well in comparison to men. They have to fight for themselves. Sometimes they do not get support from their partner as well as society. Some people of the society make attempt to realize them as inferior from men. Although government is making effort to uplift the conditions of women to make them self reliant, covid-19 pandemic make a contribution in weakening women entrepreneurship in India. Most of the women have lost their jobs or put shutter on their business due to present pandemic. The present paper is an attempt to assess the present conditions and highlights the key issues faced by women entrepreneurs in India during covid-19 pandemic.

Key words: Covid-19, pandemic, women entrepreneurship, challenges

I INTRODUCTION

Today women are not confined to the four walls of house but they have been showing great courage in operating business, commercial, administrative activities. During last few decades, Indian women have showing remarkable progress in every sphere. They have been generating employment opportunities for the country. There has been remarkable increase in economic participation of the women in India. But Covid-19 pandemic has widened the gap between male entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs. Lockdown resulted by corona virus has changed the demand pattern of consumers. Now they have set their new priorities towards expenses. There has been a great loss of revenue in almost every sector of Indian economy. Women entrepreneurs have also been suffered from such shock. Most of the female businesses have been closed.

II OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

(a) Objectives of the Study

- (i) To study the factors that play vital role in influencing women to become entrepreneurs.
- (ii) To study the problems faced by women entrepreneurs during Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- (iii) To suggest measures to encourage women entrepreneurship during pandemic situation.

(b) Research Methodology - The present paper is based on secondary data. These data is collected from different sources like books, e-newspaper, journals and internet websites. Different research papers based on Women Entrepreneurship were studied. Data collected from Survey Reports of Bain and Company, AWE Foundation, Google, Aspen network of Development Entrepreneurs were taken into consideration in the present study.

III STATUS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- (a) Concept of Women Entrepreneurs** - Women Entrepreneurs means confident, innovative and creative woman or group of women who take the initiative of starting a business enterprise, organize the factor of production, operate the business, bear the risk of uncertainty of running the business. As per Government of India, an enterprise owned and controlled by a women having minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated by the enterprise women.
- (b) Factors influencing Women Entrepreneurs** - It is generally considered that women had carried her business in initial stage were Pappad, Pickles and Powder. These businesses are easily operated by them because they have expertise in this kind of activities which related to their kitchen. This is half true but not all most. Today women are capable of managing both in house and out house activities. They are managing their social life as well as business life. There are various factors influencing women to become entrepreneurs. They are divided into two broad categories i.e. pull factors and push factors as shown in the figure 1.

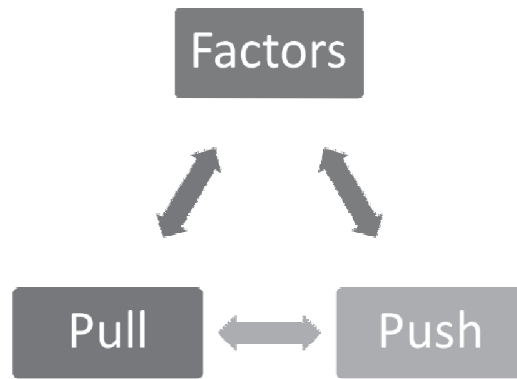


Fig. 1: Types of factors

Pull factors are those factors which motivate woman from herself. It is that factor which makes confidence to do any activity of own interest. There are various pull factors such as financial and social challenges, opportunities, rewards, potential skill etc. It is that factor which motivates women to do for their own

sake and society. They are ready to face challenges and come upfront in the society. These social and financial challenges pull themselves out from the home and make their own identity in the society. Some of the pull factors are shown in the figure2.

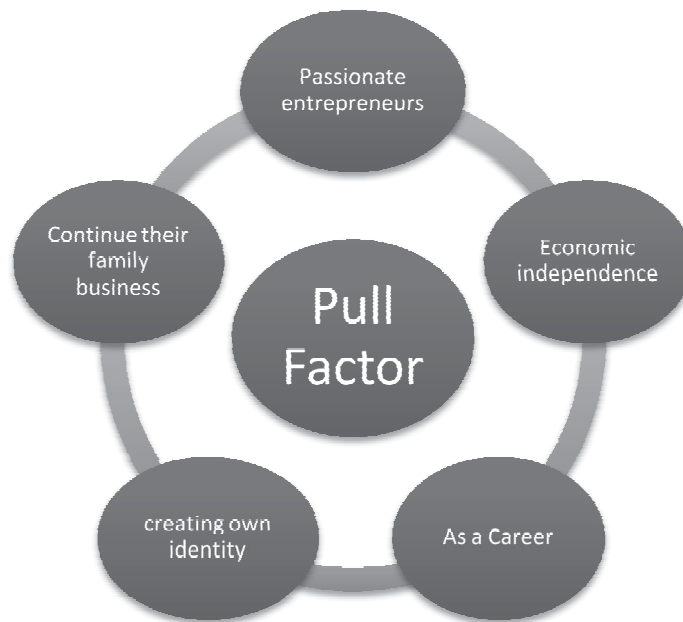


Fig. 2: Pull Factors influencing Women Entrepreneurs

Push Factors are those factors which are created by either by external factors or bad performance in their current job. These factors push women to go for their

own business enterprise. Sometimes condition of the family pushes her to become entrepreneur. Some of the push factors are shown in the figure 3.

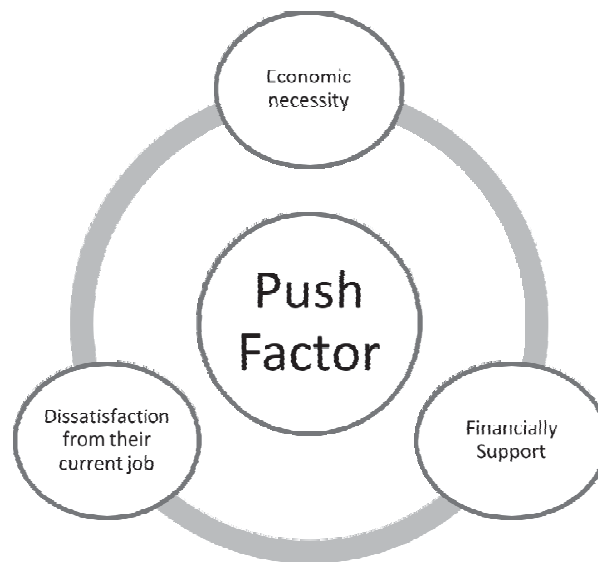


Fig. 3: Push Factors influencing Women Entrepreneurs

IV PROBLEMS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS DURING COVID-19

- (a) **Increased Domestic Responsibilities** - Due to lockdown resulted from covid-19; responsibilities of women have been increasing. They have not only to look after their businesses but also towards family. They have to manage their home with family priorities. As they have to focus on the education of their children because classes are being conducted online. They have to sit with their children. In urban areas, they have to do the responsibilities of managing their home which were earlier fulfilled by servants and helpers. Due to lockdown, health issues and migration of workers to their hometowns, they have to fulfill the needs of their family. So these distractions make them low focused on their enterprise.
- (b) **Lack of Financial resources** - Most of the women have very less tangible assets in their own name. They have very little ownership on assets. They are suffering from lack of financial support. During Covid-19 pandemic, businesses have been badly affected especially women enterprise. Bankers, creditors, investors are not directly ready to provide financial assistance because of lack of credit worthiness and financial securities.
- (c) **Disruptions in Supply chain** - The present pandemic struck hardly supply chain management system. Consumer demand, Production, logistics, supply chain all have been disrupted. Consumers have set their priorities. Consumers are demanding necessities goods. Goods are produced at low level due to low demand. These disruptions in supply chain and

low demand have shaken the business of women entrepreneurs. Due to pandemic, lots of orders have been cancelled. This resulted in loss of revenue.

- (d) **Lack of digital education** - During pandemic, most of the women entrepreneurs have closed their businesses. Some of the women entrepreneurs in urban areas have changed their business model. They are using digital platforms to sell their products. But all women entrepreneurs do not have digital awareness. They do not have digital awareness due to lack of education or digital training especially in rural areas. They do not possess ability of marketing and promoting their products using digital platforms. They don't know to use digital platforms for making payments.
- (e) **Lack of family support** - This is a very big challenge for women entrepreneurs to fetch support from their families before pandemic. Covid-19 pandemic struck the confidence of women entrepreneurs. They did not get support from external as well as internal members. Most of the families have suppressed the mission and vision of women entrepreneurs by setting family priorities first.
- (f) **Lack of financial awareness** - Women Entrepreneurs have less financial awareness as compare to male entrepreneurs. They do not have awareness of government schemes, projects, yojanas, financial incentives, entrepreneurship development programmes, subsidies etc. There are various training and development programmes being conducted by government and other agencies for creating technical and financial awareness in women entrepreneurs.

- (g) **Mobility restriction** - Women entrepreneurs are generally not engaged in field work. They have less mobility factor in compare to male entrepreneurs. Some work or businesses are there where more physical connection or relationship with customers has to be maintained. As a result of Lockdown, less connectivity with customer, mobility restriction and disruption of supply chain contributed a huge loss to the Women entrepreneurs in India. Due to mobility restrictions induced by Covid-19, Women entrepreneurs were unable to understand and assess the priorities and preferences of customers.
- (h) **Working capital crisis** - Women Entrepreneurs suffered a huge working capital crisis during present pandemic situation. They did not get fresh orders from customers even old advanced orders have been cancelled. Customers spend money only for necessary items. Demand was gradually reduced. Huge inventories of goods remained in godown. Women entrepreneurs paid salary of workers out of their personal saving. They have not been able to arrange enough working capital for their day to day business activities.

V SUGGESTIONS

- The government should encourage women entrepreneurship by enhancing provision of credit especially for Women enterprise with low rate of interest.
- The government should encourage gender parity by procuring goods and services from women entrepreneurs with some reservation.
- The Central and State Government should give more financial incentives to the enterprise operated by Women.
- There should be interventions of experts related with their field which will provide guidance to improve scale of operations and enhancing their leadership and managerial skills.
- The present pandemic provides opportunities to both government and other agencies to make financial services more inclusive for women entrepreneurs so that they can be able to access information, resources etc.
- Entrepreneurship supported organizations should work on digital awareness of women entrepreneurs in urban as well as rural backgrounds.

VI CONCLUSION

Covid-19 pandemic have shown a great socio-economic impact on the women entrepreneurship. They have suffered a huge loss during pandemic. This pandemic has shown some positive impact also. Some of the female entrepreneurs had already changed their business models and include new services and products. Some of women entrepreneurs have shown response towards Covid-19 by introducing digital and online mode of marketing their products. The reports of the surveying agencies also state that some of the women entrepreneurs believes that this pandemic made them more capable to adapt any situation and their status in the family and society has been get enhanced. Government and Entrepreneurship supported agencies should do more work on reviving women entrepreneurs from pandemic situation.

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