

Empowerment extent of women entrepreneurs

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ABSTRACT : Empowerment implies a state of mind and attitude of a person. The aim of present study was to explore extent of empowerment of women entrepreneurs. Descriptive type of research design was used to study three indicators of empowerment namely decision-making, sense of personal efficacy and achievements after venturing an enterprise of 60 women entrepreneurs running boutique/beauty parlour. For assessing decision-making, decision-making index was developed. To measure sense of personal efficacy an inventory of thoughts and tendencies consisting of appropriate statements devised by Prayag Mehta (1995) was used. For assessing achievements after running enterprise, full freedom was given to the entrepreneurs to express their achievements. Primary data were collected through interview schedule in zones of Agra city in U.P. during 2005. Percentage was used as a statistical measure. The study showed that entrepreneurs were taking decisions related to economic security, making heavy purchases, daily purchases, mobility in reference of enterprise and major decisions relating to the enterprise and possessing average sense of personal efficacy. Entrepreneurs expressed achievements, which were increase in self-confidence, taking immediate decisions; increase in recognition, become self-dependent and increase in their self-respect. The findings of the study are based on expressed opinions of the entrepreneurs. Hence, the objectivity would be limited to the extent of the entrepreneurs' honest opinions. In spite of this limitation, it is hoped that the findings of this study would provide a better insight in preparing the future plan for empowering women.

KEY WORDS : Empowerment, Decision-making, Sense of personal efficacy, Entrepreneurship

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has been recognized as the engine of economic change in all parts of the world. Entrepreneurs are the directors in the drama of economic development, who accelerate the process of economic development through innovations, adventurism, incalculable risk-bearing, the optimum co-ordination of factors of production. Therefore, it can be said that entrepreneurship among women contributes to a large extent towards women empowerment. Empowerment is the composite effect of self-respect, self-confidence and

self - esteem. Feeling of self respect is developed when she experiences that she is right as a person, right in her characteristics, manner of action and feels that she is good. Self-confidence is a woman's confidence in the reliability of her mind. It is conviction that she is able to think, know and correct errors. The sum of self-respect and self-confidence is called self-esteem. When self- esteem is developed, the woman becomes completely empowered. It is fervent hope that entrepreneurship will change the role of woman from a 'choice-taker' to a 'choice maker' completely. A number of suggested indicators used for measuring empowerment as given by

Table A: Indicators used for measuring empowerment	
Psychologist	Tool or indicators used
Programme of action - national policy on education (1986)	Building a positive self-image and self confidence; Developing ability to think critically; Building-up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action; Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social changes;
Srinath (1993)	Empowerment index in which self- perception, decision-making, self-reliance and communication are included.
Mehta (1995)	Autonomy vs dependence Self-esteem vs self-depreciation; Reflective vs repetitive behaviour
Stromquist (1995)	Dimensions of empowerment Cognitive Economic Psychological Political
Hashemi (1996)	Eight indicators Mobility; Economic security; Ability to make purchases; Ability to make larger purchase; Involvement in major decisions; Relative freedom from domination by the family; Political and legal awareness; Involvement in political campaigning and protests;
Amin <i>et al.</i> (1998)	Three components Inter-spouse consultation index, which seeks to represent the extent to which husbands consult their wives in household affairs; Individual autonomy index which represents women's self- reported autonomy of physical movement outside the house and in matters of spending money; Authority index, which reports on actual decision-making power, which is traditionally in the hands of the patriarch of the family.
Balasubramani (2001)	Self-esteem Creativity; Autonomy; Development, functioning style; Decision making
Handy and Kassam (2004)	Empowerment measures Personal autonomy index Visiting respondents parental home; Visiting hospital; Visiting village market; Helping a relative with money;

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	Setting money aside for respondent's use; Family decision-making index Children's education in school; Family planning; Family day to day expenditure; Going outside of home; Medical treatment; Entertaining guests; Buying respondent's traditionally favourite things; Economic-domestic consultation index Buying household furniture and utensils; Purchase of land; Education/expenses of children; Purchasing medical treatment of family; Purchasing women's cloth; Purchasing children's cloth; Purchasing daily food; Political Autonomy Index Voting according to own decision; Awareness of any political issue; Participating in any public protest; Campaigning politically; Standing for elections;
Barner (1994)	Well trained; Confident; Enthusiastic; Motivated; Committed; Ability to use natural creativity; Ability to take responsibility; Ability to communicate needs; Problems and ideas; Ability to work on their own or in a group; Ability to take decisions, individually as also involving others; Proud of their work; Proud of their group of which they belong; Developing trust on others; Ability to create trust in others for oneself; Comfortable about questioning the status; Ability to understand the context and consequences of their own actions; Knowledge about how well they are performing; Empowered outside the work place/ community as well; ability to keep learning and developing.

different authors have been summarized in Table A.

Tambunan (2009), made a study on recent developments of women entrepreneurs in Asian developing countries. Her study focused mainly on women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises based on data analysis and review of recent key literature. This study found that in Asian developing countries SMEs are gaining overwhelming importance; more than 95 per cent of all firms in all sectors on average per country.

Singh (2008) identifies the reasons and influencing factors behind entry of women in entrepreneurship. He explained the characteristics of their businesses in Indian context and also obstacles and challenges.

Lall and Sahai (2008) conduct a comparative assessment of multi-dimensional issues and challenges of women entrepreneurship and family business. The study identified Psychographic variables like, degree of commitment, entrepreneurial challenges and future plan for expansion, based on demographic variables.

Cohoon *et al.* (2010) presented a detailed exploration of men and women entrepreneur's motivations, background and experiences. The study is based on the data collected from successful women entrepreneurs. Out of them 59 per cent had founded two or more companies. The study identifies top five financial and psychological factors motivating women become entrepreneurs.

Greene *et al.* (2003), evaluate the research and publication contribution in the area of women entrepreneurship. The study categorized various journal and resources of research on the basis of certain parameters concerned with women entrepreneurship like gender discrimination, personal attributes, financing challenges, business unit, context and feminist perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive type of research design was used in the present study. Agra division of the Uttar Pradesh was selected as the locale for the present study by using purposive sampling. Agra division comprises of seven districts, out of which, Agra district was selected randomly. For the purpose of administration, Agra district was divided into two areas; Agra Urban and Agra Rural. Agra Urban was selected randomly for the present study. According to the requirements and to have balanced distribution of the respondents, the investigator divided Agra city into four zones; North-East zone; North-West zone; South-East zone and South-west zone. Based on the extension review of literature and discussion with the experts, three indicators namely; decision making, sense of personal efficacy and achievements after venturing into an enterprise were selected. For assessing decision making of 60 women entrepreneurs, decision making index was developed in which question were asked relating to economic security,

making small purchases, heavy purchases, daily purchases, discarding items in home, children's education, children's marriage, mobility in reference to enterprise, major decisions relating to enterprise and incidental. Responses to all these aspects of decision-making process were close-ended, wherein four probable categories of responses were given. These were relating to the person who was the main decision maker like family members; husband alone, joint decision of entrepreneurs and her husband and entrepreneurs alone. To measure sense of personal efficacy an inventory of thoughts and tendencies consisting of appropriate statements devised by Mehta (1995) was used and scoring was done accordingly. For assessing achievements after venturing into an enterprise, full freedom was given to the entrepreneurs to express their achievements from their view point as well as from the view point of her customers and one score was given to each achievement. The data were processed, tabulated and classified. Analysis was done on the basis of organized data. Percentage was used as statistical measure. This provided the basis for conclusion being drawn and recommendation can be made. Primary data were collected through interview schedule during year 2005 and percentage was used as statistical measure.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Extent of empowerment of women entrepreneurs was studied under three heads such as; decision-making, sense of personal efficacy and achievements after venturing into an enterprise.

- Out of 60 entrepreneurs, only 52 entrepreneurs were married/ widow/ divorcee having children receiving education. The rest 8 were unmarried so they have not been included in this aspect for analysis.
- Out of 52 married entrepreneurs, only 43 entrepreneurs were those whose children were in the marriageable age. Nine entrepreneurs, though married, did not have children in the marriageable age at the time of investigation so 43 entrepreneurs were taken for analysis.

Figures in the table clearly indicate that majority of entrepreneurs (90%) took major decisions related to economic security alone. Economic security includes decisions relating to savings and investments for family's future needs.

Decisions relating to make small purchases in home *i.e.* purchase of electric / non-electric appliances which are handy and save time and energy. It helps the entrepreneur to utilise saved time and energy from household activities for entrepreneurial activity. These items are used by other family members also. So it was joint decision of the entrepreneurs with their husband and the family members to purchase these items.

In contrast, when heavy purchases were to be made, 38

per cent of the entrepreneurs were taking the decision independently. The decisions were relating to purchase television, refrigerator, house, car and scooter etc. Thirty-three per cent expressed that it was joint decisions with their husbands. Husband and wife both are regarded as two wheels of the family life cart.

The home being the major domain of the woman, whether she becomes an entrepreneur or holds any position in the society, this is one of the duties and responsibilities, which she only has to perform. So she knows what she requires and where to spend daily. Forty-five per cent entrepreneurs took the decision themselves regarding daily purchases – as purchases of vegetables, snacks, beverages, newspapers, payment of electric bill, milkman, maidservants etc.

Decisions regarding discarding items of the home were being mainly taken up by 46.7 per cent of the family members and 30 per cent reported that husband and wife jointly were taking up this decision.

The main responsibility of children's education lies on the parents. They are the builder and moulder of their child's future. The 61.5 per cent of the parents were taking joint decision related to children's education.

The child's marriage normally is the responsibility of all the family members. In the present study 65.1 per cent of the entrepreneurs reported that this decision was taken-up by all the family members.

As an entrepreneur she has to take many decisions relating to mobility. Forty-one per cent of the entrepreneurs took the decisions independently regarding to where to go, whom to meet and talk to, where to make purchases, sell goods and related contacts. While 33.3 per cent were supported by their husbands in making a joint decisions (Table 1).

Other major decisions related to their enterprise were also taken by maximum of the entrepreneurs (56.7%) themselves. These decisions were related to quality of raw material to be purchased, technology, number of employees,

their salary structure, manufacturing and servicing charges etc.

Sometimes unexpected problems arise which have been termed as incidental decisions. Such types of decisions were jointly taken by 55 per cent of the entrepreneurs with their husbands.

Seeing to the data on the decision making role of the entrepreneurs, it can be observed that women entrepreneurs are playing an independent as well as joint role in taking decisions relating to major items in the home and the enterprise. She is moving ahead by becoming a choice - maker rather than a choice-taker. This indicates that after venturing into the enterprise, the capabilities and potentialities have increased. They were moving from womanhood to personhood.

It is clearly indicated from the data given in Table 2 that all the entrepreneurs possessed sense of personal efficacy.

Majority (83.3%) of women entrepreneurs were possessing average sense of personal efficacy. Only 16 per cent of women entrepreneurs showed high sense of personal efficacy. These were mainly those who had been in the line of entrepreneurship long back (Table 2).

The entrepreneurs possessing average sense of personal efficacy were still not so much clear about their abilities, the skills they possessed, did not possess full confidence, were not clear about the roles and tasks which they have to perform as entrepreneurs in comparison to those entrepreneurs who possessed a high sense of personal efficacy. Entrepreneurs with the high sense of personal efficacy were more confident and clear about their strengths and weakness. Knowledge of one's own weaknesses helps entrepreneurs to make progress.

Achievements can be observed from the Table 3 that 61.7 per cent of the entrepreneurs felt that the self-confidence has increased by becoming entrepreneur. Self-confidence is a woman's confidence in the reliability of her mind. It is not the conviction that she can never make an error. It is the convictions that one is able to think, judge, know and correct error.

Sr. No.	Decision-making aspects relating to	Persons				Total
		Family member	Husband alone	Joint decision	Entrepreneurs alone	
1.	Economic security	3 (5)	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)	54 (90)	60 (100)
2.	Making small purchases	28 (46.7)	4 (6.7)	17 (28.3)	11(18.3)	60 (100)
3.	Make heavy purchases	8 (13.3)	9 (15)	20 (33.3)	23 (38.3)	60 (100)
4.	Make daily purchases	6 (10)	9 (15)	18 (30)	27 (45)	60 (100)
5.	Discarding items in home	28 (46.7)	7 (11.7)	18 (30)	7 (11.7)	60 (100)
6.	Children's education	5 (9.6)	5 (9.6)	32 (61.5)	10 (19.2)	52 *(100)
7.	Children's marriage	28 (65.1)	3 (6.9)	11 (25.6)	1 (2.3)	43 **(100)
8.	Freedom of mobility	7 (11.7)	8 (13.3)	20 (33.3)	25 (41.7)	60 (100)
9.	Major decisions relating to the enterprise	4 (6.7)	11 (18.3)	11(18.3)	34 (56.7)	60 (100)
10.	Incidental	7 (11.7)	13 (21.7)	33.(55.0)	7(11.7)	60 (100)

Figures in parentheses show percentage distribution in each category

Table 2 : Distribution of entrepreneurs according to their sense of personal efficacy (n=60)

Sr. No.	Sense of personal efficacy	Entrepreneurs	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low	0	0
2.	Average	50	83.3
3.	High	10	16.7
	Total	60	100.0

Table 3 : Achievements after venturing into an enterprise among women entrepreneurs (n=60)

Sr. No.	Achievements	Entrepreneurs	
		Frequency	Percentage*
1.	Improvement in skills	15	25.0
2.	Increase in self-confidence	37	61.7
3.	Become self-dependent	29	48.3
4.	Increase in social circle	7	11.7
5.	Courage in facing circumstances	5	8.3
6.	Can take immediate decisions	32	53.3
7.	Feeling of satisfaction	7	11.7
8.	Increase in self-respect	20	33.3
9.	Come for suggestions	9	15.0
10.	Peoples increased faith	12	20.0
11.	Ask for loan	9	15.0
12.	Increased recognition	32	53.3
13.	Peoples interest in joining for job	12	20.0

* Percentage is calculated on the basis of 60 entrepreneurs.

53.3 per cent of the entrepreneurs each expressed that after venturing into the entrepreneurial world they were able to take immediate decisions when and whenever they were required. Their recognition as an entrepreneur has increased which they could judge when others used prestigious words for her. This acts as reinforcement that motivates the entrepreneurs for excellent performance.

48.3 per cent had become self-dependent after venturing into an enterprise. This clearly indicates that the entrepreneur was becoming clearer about her abilities, values, and strengths—slowly but simultaneously.

33.3 per cent had said that they realised increase in self-respect. Self-respect is something that a woman develops as she acquires a sense of being a capable person and progressively becomes aware of her own power to choose her action. She experiences that she is right as a person, right in her characteristics, in her manner of actions and feels that she is going on right track.

25 per cent entrepreneurs said that there was improvement in their skills after venturing into the enterprise. They had not taken any training, so with experience their

skills had improved. It proves that practice makes a man / woman perfect.

Peoples' faith had increased in their boutique/ beauty parlour, which was perceived by 20 per cent of the entrepreneurs. Day-by-day more number of customers were being added to their boutique / beauty parlour. Secondly more number of people were interested in joining their boutique/ beauty parlour for job. This was because the entrepreneur's enterprise had gained name and fame in the society.

Fifteen per cent of the entrepreneurs each had expressed that people venturing into the same enterprise came to her for suggestions relating to setting-up the enterprise, management of the enterprise and related factors of the enterprise. The same percentage also came to them for information on loan-place from where the loan could be taken, formalities, procurement and other such related aspects.

The social circle and feeling of satisfaction had increased for 11 per cent of the entrepreneurs.

Only 8 per cent of entrepreneurs expressed that they felt courage in facing circumstances as experience had made them so. It means entrepreneurship helps in bringing about tremendous sense of freedom, breaking of bonds and helps them in facing different types of situations.

Conclusion:

After entering into the entrepreneurial world, the role of entrepreneurs in decision-making had improved. Now they were taking independent decisions relating to economic security, enterprise, freedom of mobility and also were taking decisions regarding the daily and heavy purchases of the house. Decision-making being one of the major indicators of the extent of empowerment shows that now the women were in a better position to take decisions individually. They were also being involved in the joint decisions with their husband regarding children's education and the incidental decisions.

Personal efficacy the second indicator for the extent of empowerment relates to the strength to the person's belief that he or she can make a difference and influences their environment and is capable of successfully performing specific roles and tasks. Entrepreneurs possessed average sense of personal efficacy. As the decision-making power increases so the sense of personal efficacy increases. The third indicator, achievements after venturing into an enterprise's outcome is that the women entrepreneurs had become self-dependent, her self-confidence had increased. They were able to take immediate decisions and along with it she was being recognized in the society as an entrepreneur, contributing to the general upliftment of the community. The increase in all the above indicators after venturing into the enterprise reveals that the entrepreneurs were becoming empowered. Since the study was conducted in only one district, Agra, where entrepreneurial activity is

done on a large scale, the recommendations of the study may be applicable to other similar regions and other similar type of enterprise women venture into. In spite of this limitation, it is hoped that the findings of this study would provide a better insight in preparing the future plan for the entrepreneurship development among women for awakening them as human being.

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