

Determinants of Women Entrepreneurship in Kerala: A case of Home-Based Beauty Salons

ANUPAMA.P.NAIR
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN ECONOMICS
DEPT.OF ECONOMICS
GOVT.COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
KERALA.

ABSTRACT

Indian women form part of half of the total world population and as such, constitute a vital segment of our society. Women in traditional India were found confined within the four walls of their houses doing all the household activities, including taking care of their children and managing kitchen works. Majority of them were reluctant to break the shackles of these four walls, maybe due to the patriarchal nature of our society. But modern-day, women are trying hard to overcome these socio-economic barriers and thriving hard to take part in all sorts of economic activities. With changes in the socio-cultural environments and increasing educational opportunities, women are gradually entering into the field of entrepreneurship, especially Micro-entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs are regarded as individuals who take up challenging roles, in which they would want to adjust their economic independence, social and family life. Usually, a woman entrepreneur is perceived as a maker of household goods like pickles, pappads, etc. But today, with the changing scenario of women development, they are assuming the essential role of becoming owners and decision-makers of non-traditional enterprises, where growth and employment generation are imminent. Women nowadays take up more challenging activities like computer training, beauty salons, catering services, etc. With the beauty business thriving in the country, beauty clinics and saloons have started making their way into smaller cities and towns. Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala has also got its share of beauty clinics. Apart from large parlours, there are micro parlours run by women from their homes primarily aimed at supplementing the family income. Under this backdrop, this study seeks to find out the promoting and demoting factors of women entrepreneurs running home-based beauty salons from Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. An attempt has also been made to identify the significant problems encountered.

KEYWORDS: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS, HOME-BASED BEAUTY SALONS, MICRO-ENTERPRISE

Entrepreneurship among women has been a recent concern for all of us. Though women in traditional societies are confined to the four walls of houses doing all the household works including taking care of the children, the concept and status of women in the modern society has been changed substantially. Women today have come out of the four walls of their houses to participate in all sorts of activities. With changes in the socio-cultural environments and increasing educational opportunities, women are gradually entering into the field of entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurs should be regarded as individuals who take up challenging roles, in which they would want to adjust their economic independence, social and family life. Usually, a woman entrepreneur is perceived as a maker of household goods like pickles, pappads, etc. But with the changing scenario of women development, they are assuming the role of becoming actual owners and decision-makers of non-traditional micro-enterprises, where growth and employment generation are imminent. Women now days are taking up non-traditional activities like computer training, catering services, beauty parlours, gym, etc.

Studies on Women Entrepreneurship in Kerala

Since Kerala lacks entrepreneurial resources, studies on women entrepreneurship are few. An earlier attempt in this regard was made by Pillai and Anna (1990). They studied the socio-political factors which prevented entrepreneurship development on a sample of 102 women entrepreneurs in Ernakulam district. They concluded that women in Kerala were 'not coming forward to take industrial ventures that demand initiative and optimism'. Another attempt was made by Sally (1998), who studied the motivating dimensions of entrepreneurs in Kerala. Koshy and Joseph (2000) found that women in Kerala have turned into entrepreneurship by starting small enterprises and that too because of low barriers to entry and the flexible nature of work. D'cruz (2003) tried to examine the promoting and prohibiting factors of women entrepreneurship on a sample of 200 entrepreneurs of Thiruvananthapuram District. Santha (2007) investigated the socio-economic status and problems of women entrepreneurs in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Manoj (2008) studied the participation of women entrepreneurs in the various Kudumbashree units of Kerala.

Studies on entrepreneurship among women in Kerala reveal that the research on women entrepreneurship in Kerala is scarce and scattered with only a few in-depth studies. Hence there is a need for a detailed survey of entrepreneurship in the light of changing entrepreneurial environment exposed to women.

Statement of the problem

Women in Kerala constitute 52.01% of the total population as per 2011 census. The sex-ratio well above unity continues to be favourable to women having 1084, compared to 940 for the country as a whole. Female literacy in Kerala is one of the highest in the country with 91.98%. Women are receiving higher education in arts, science and technical subjects. Despite high literacy among women, high levels of professional knowledge, and massive amounts spent on women's education, women entering into employment are few. According to the various NSSO surveys on employment and unemployment, Kerala has the highest female unemployment in the country. The NSSO data for 2011-12 indicates that the overall unemployment rate in Kerala is 6.7, with a gender gap of 14.1 percent for women as against 2.9 percent for men (Varma, 2019). This unemployment level could have been remedied by encouraging micro-business creation and self-employment among women. Here micro-entrepreneurship has a vital role to play.

Significance of the Study

With the beauty business thriving in the country, beauty clinics and salons have started making their way into smaller cities and towns. The district of Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala too has its share of beauty clinics. Most reputed among them include Eves, Nefertiti, etc. Apart from these large parlours, there are smaller parlours run by women from their homes and primarily aimed at supplementing the family income. Little research has been done in women entrepreneurship, especially those about women entrepreneurship in beauty salons run from own houses. Hence the relevance of the study.

Meaning and concept of women entrepreneur and micro-enterprise

In the simplest sense, women entrepreneurs are those women who take the lead and organise some business and provide employment to others. Thus women entrepreneurs may be defined as the woman or group of women who manage and operate a business enterprise.

Anyhow the Govt. of India defined women entrepreneur as " an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women".

Micro-enterprise or micro business refers to a small business with a single owner-operator employing one or two persons (Das, 2009)

The present study is confined to women entrepreneurs who run home-based beauty salons in Thiruvananthapuram city and provide employment to at least one employee.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are stated below.

- (a) To examine the socio-economic profile of women entrepreneurs in beauty salons.
- (b) To understand the profile of the business enterprise.
- (c) To determine the promoting and demoting factors in their career.

Methodology

The methodology of this study depends on the nature of the problem and the objectives of the study. Both primary and secondary data have been made use of. Primary data was collected from a sample of 28 respondents of Thiruvananthapuram city who own home-based beauty salons employing at least one employee using a well-structured questionnaire. Secondary data sources include books and reputed journals, various reports like census reports, Planning Board Economic Review, etc. The data so collected were analysed using simple statistical tools.

Information on various aspects was collected from the respondents using a well-structured questionnaire consisting of 25 questions. The profiles of the respondents cover their socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Details regarding the types of services provided, reasons for choosing this vocation and motivating and hindering factors in business were collected. An attempt was also made to elicit information on the problems faced by the respondents. The replies so received were tabulated. The results of the analysis on socio-economic profile, the profile of the enterprise, motivating and hindering factors and problems faced in business are presented below:-

I SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

The socio-economic profiles of the respondents cover their age, marital status and educational qualification. Majority of the respondents (57.14%) are in the age group 30-39 years of age. 92.86% of the respondents are married, and the majority of them were married at the time of starting their business. Only 7.14% belong to the unmarried category. All of the 28 respondents have received formal education. The majority (57.14%) of them are graduates and 32.14% postgraduates. Only 3.58% have a technical education.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE	%OF RESPONDENTS	CATEGORY
AGE	57.14	30-39 YEARS
MARITAL STATUS	92.86	MARRIED
EDUCATION	57.14	GRADUATES

Source: Primary Survey, October 2019.

II PROFILE OF THE ENTERPRISE

More than half of the respondents (57.14%) started their enterprise before attaining the age of 30 years. It is found from the table that 92.86% of the respondents had their establishments for 6 to 9 years. 7.14% had started the business for two years. The sustenance of the salon depended on the longevity of business which is further accompanied by customer loyalty. Twenty-three respondents spent around 50,000 rupees for starting a business, 3 of them around 75,000. Nobody was found to have expended more than 1, 00,000 rupees for starting their venture. This is deficient levels compared to any other fields of entrepreneurship. This might be one of the reasons behind women choosing this vocation. The beauty salons cater to a variety of services like Haircutting, Threading and Waxing, Pedicure and Manicure, Facials and Bridal Make-up. 53.57% of the respondents earn income in the category 5000-10,000 rupees, 42.86% 10,000-20,000 rupees. Only 3.58% earn more than 20,000 a month.

III Reasons for starting this vocation

The majority (57.14%) of the respondents were attracted to this vocation due to the low levels of investment required to start business compared to others. Another 25% argued that the durability of parlour products is very high compared to manufacturing products.

IV Promoting and Demoting Factors

The promoting factors are those motivating factors which prompted the entrepreneurs to enter into entrepreneurship. The Prime motivators in business (57.14%) were family, friends and relatives followed by self-motivation (17.86%). (10.71%) started this business to be independent and to support their own families.

The Demoting factors are those hindering factors which act as obstructions in the way of business of women entrepreneurs. Such factors have a negative bearing on the prospects of the business run by women entrepreneurs. Majority of the respondents (85.71%) found it difficult to perform multiple roles. Another group (10.71%) were worried about their health. Yet another factor identified as stress management associated with the

business. A very few categories were worried about problem-solving skills related to business, especially when it comes to the matter of retaining customers, provision of best service, etc. Very few were highly satisfied with the services provided by their employees, and they are contented.

V Problems faced

A 64.29 percent of the respondents were afraid of other people's attitude towards their vocation. Some others (21.43%) found it very difficult to get trustworthy customers. Other problems mentioned include health hazards created by other parlours (10.71%) and difficulties created by unqualified beauticians (3.58%).

VI Policy Suggestions

Based on the knowledge gained from the study, it is possible to make a few policy suggestions.

It is understood that parlours in the city have absolutely no guidelines or regulations governing them. So the government should grant licences for qualified beauty therapists and should conduct periodic monitoring of their activities. As suggested by one of the sample entrepreneurs, the government should acknowledge the legitimate beauty salons applying ethical practices. Such acknowledgement could be made by granting awards to female entrepreneurs operating legitimate businesses. This would instil confidence in the minds of prospective clients. The government should also monitor unhygienic practices by enforcing the beauty salons to use disposable tools. If they persist in reusing their tools despite the implementation of such rules, the government should withdraw their licences. Not only the government, but the researchers could help reduce the damage created by bad publicity. Researches should be conducted to build awareness among people so that beauty parlours will also be viewed as a legal profession. Most of the research studies focus on the financial difficulties and marketing skills of women entrepreneurs. But more emphasis should be placed on unravelling social issues and concerns of female entrepreneurs.

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