

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is a creative process in which specific goals are achieved using different resources in a planned and coordinated manner to perform various functions in an efficient way. It is regarded as the engine of economic growth. All over the world, a revolution is driving by entrepreneurs in transforming and renewing economies.

At present self-employment has great importance in India due to increasing population along with jobless growth. Government of India has been implementing lots of schemes and programmes to increase self-employment so that employment opportunities can be increased as well as optimum utilisation of local resources can be done.

The present study is relevant in the context of Micro, Small and Medium entrepreneurs in whose actual importance in Sonitpur district is yet to be assessed. Sonitpur district is situated on the North Bank of Brahmaputra. It is a backward region characterised by agrarian economy and about 80 percent of total population (2011) is dependent on agricultural sector. During field study, it was noticed that there has been a gradual increase in the participation of women in small business indicating the immense potential for entrepreneurial development among women. No doubt the number of women entrepreneurs has been increasing but due to untapped entrepreneurial ability of women in the study area, having resources and potentials, the Sonitpur district is not growing with the pace of mainstream line. The significance of this study lies in the fact that all the women entrepreneurs that listed as respondents were subjected to an in-depth interview. A thorough and detailed study of the many facets of entrepreneurship among women was preferred. This study tries to focus on micro and macro factors which hinder women for undertaking their own enterprises. This study is an attempt to tap the unexplored areas and to identify their challenges which would go a long way in helping entrepreneurial

activities among them. Extensive literature review is done in this topic by the researcher and after doing vigorous literature review, the following objectives have been set up in this study.

Objectives:

1. To find out socio-economic factors that influence the women to become an entrepreneur,
2. To examine the infrastructural facility available for the development of women entrepreneurship,
3. To study the area of interest of women entrepreneur in traditional business as well as non-traditional business,
4. To study the impact of government policies and programmes for the development of women entrepreneurship,
5. To examine the role of financial institutions in women entrepreneurship development,
6. To analyse the challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs,

Hypothesis:

Keeping in view the above objectives of the study, the following hypothesis will be tested in this research work.

^{1st}Hypothesis:

H₀₁: The level of education has no significant impact on the growth of income of women entrepreneur of the study area.

2nd Hypothesis:

H₀₂: Location of the business has no significant impact on the growth of income of women entrepreneur in the study area.

3rd Hypothesis:

H₀₃: The measures taken by the government are not sufficient for the sustainable growth in income of women entrepreneurs in the study area.

Coming to the research methodology part, descriptive survey method is used in this research work. The population of the study are all registered and non-registered women entrepreneurs. The study is mainly based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the greater Sonitpur district where 14 blocks are located. Out of these 14 blocks, 50 percent of blocks were selected randomly (7 blocks for study). These are (a) Barchala, (b) Dhekiajuli, (c) Bihaguri, (d) Gabharu, (e) Balipara, (f) Rangapara, and (g) Naduar. Within each block, the respondents under study were selected by simple random sampling technique. The total sample size was 430 (both registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs) and collected through a structured questionnaire. To draw primary data, the study adopted a personal contact method. It helps to collect the required primary data by going deeply into the feelings of the entrepreneurs. For making the study more meaningful and useful, there was an exchange of ideas. The researcher has selected both registered and non-registered women entrepreneurs for the present study so that the overall picture and status of women entrepreneurs reveal. Questions are prepared after reviewing enough research papers. The questions are used to identify the important variables which are considered in the present study. The collected data was analyzed to find out the demographic profile of the women entrepreneurs and to draw inferences by applying simple statistical techniques like percentage, tables, graphs, etc. Correlation-

Regression analysis, Chi-square, and ANOVA test are used to analyze the data and to find out the objectives of the study.

The result of this study revealed that the demography of Sonitpur district is not entirely homogeneous as several linguistic, religious, and ethnic communities and groups live in there. Primary data shows that with the increase of population and urbanisation, the market condition of small enterprises is gradually moving upwards. The number of women entrepreneurs has been increasing considerably during recent years. The most important factors that motivate women to be an entrepreneur are- to earn money, unemployment followed by to be independent, responsibility due to death of near relatives, get better life than before, special qualification attained for running a business/enterprise, business culture exists in the family, social status, being entrepreneur was a lifelong goal, possessing innovative skills or aspiration and challenges for something new, use of idle funds, availability of infrastructural facilities and dissatisfaction with current jobs.

Investigation revealed that the infrastructure facilities were not developed and sufficient. Though infrastructure facilities are not sound in Sonitpur, yet women entrepreneurs are moving ahead in all spheres with determination and focus. They were not only venturing into the traditional (or conventional) business ideas, but also, they were ready to explore various non-traditional (unconventional) fields and prove their best capacity.

Field study revealed that the government assistance was found beneficial to a small section of women entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas and in educated women. Due to lack of awareness, complicity in procedural formalities, lack of transparency and not getting benefits on time from government schemes and delay in implementation of policies discourages women to move one step ahead in starting and running enterprises. The impact of government policies and schemes were not favourable. Moreover, due to the ignorance, illiteracy, collateral, lengthy procedural complicity and not getting facilities on time, low repayment period; women entrepreneurs were not interested to avail loans from financial institutions.

Studies indicate that most of the women (on their personal front as individuals) are less likely to perceive themselves as the entrepreneurs and avoid supporting systems like training and courses targeted at the “entrepreneurs”. The impact of family life and childcare (on their personal front), as well as the lack of high-profile role models are other limiting factors in the study society. Women’s traditional “care-giver” roles; inequality in the sharing of these roles between men and women, as well as our perceptions of what are appropriate roles for women and men (stereotyping and hypocrisy) both at the home from and outside the home, continue to serve as the key constraints to women’s economic empowerment. Progress on these challenges can bring in a real difference to ensure equality and empowerment for women and it will ultimately help in building sustainable economies through the development of women entrepreneurship in the study area.

Hypothesis summary:

Sl.No.	Hypothesis	Result
1.	The level of education has no significant impact on the growth of income of women entrepreneur of the study area.	Rejected
2.	Location of the business has no significant impact on the growth of income of women entrepreneur of the study area.	Accepted
3.	The measures taken by the government are not sufficient for the sustainable growth in income of women entrepreneurs in the study area.	Accepted

This research reveals different challenges and puts forth some suggestions. These suggestions given by the researcher based on findings of the study. Some of the suggestions are as follows:

- Sound and continuous promotions of women entrepreneurship must be given priority to help in solving problems of unemployment in unorganized sector. Because entrepreneurship among women will not only enable them to get better jobs and economically self-sufficient, but at the same time, society will also gain by their creative and risky decisions. Their positive contribution in GDP will reduce social inequalities and will help in increasing standard of life of households. According to researcher, women entrepreneurship will help to achieve women empowerment in true sense.
- It is not the money matter only; it needs education and awareness among the people for entrepreneurship development in the society. The education system is responsible for preparing young people/first generation to build their successful lives. Expansion of entrepreneurship education is must. Entrepreneurship as a subject should be added in the curriculum to realize the importance and significance of entrepreneurship in economic development. Therefore, entrepreneurial orientation program in H.S. and College level must be included.
- Government must give emphasis on publicity of various schemes announced from time to time to encourage women to avail government policies and programmes for entrepreneurship development. This publicity should be done not only in Block level but also in grassroots level i.e., from Gram Panchayat level. Moreover, regular monitoring and supervising of implementation of these schemes is very important.
- Training programmes for entrepreneurial activities (irrespective of age and education) must be increased by providing stipends as incentives. It will definitely increase the participation rate of women. Training programmes must be related with the changing environments of the country and economy.

- The mind-set of the society must be changed over women. The burden of family i.e. caring of children, day-to-day household activities, etc. should be equally borne by all family members.
- Different financial institutions should create a supportive environment and enabling framework needed for healthy and sound entrepreneurship. Since women cannot provide required collateral for availing loan from financial institutions; therefore, financial institutions have to be more pragmatic about it by providing loan after considering feasibility and profitability of their business. It is imperative to liberalise loan procedures and formalities for women entrepreneurs.
- DIC, MSME, PMKVY, etc. should provide adequate training for different sectors in different places mainly in rural and backward areas so that women can easily choose to start a project requiring managerial skills, necessary financial support, credit related security, borrowing opportunities, etc.
- There should be frequent interaction between development agencies, respondents, expert from outside in relevant areas, which will be of much help for the success of entrepreneurship.
- In case of sanctioning and disbursement of loans, there should not be no delay by the state agencies when a project has been accepted for financial assistance.
- Marketing facilities such as sales, purchases and other required support for timely start of an enterprise, etc. are necessary for respondents. Government/NGOs should give emphasis on that.
- More commercial as well as industrial estates should be set up in various places (Block wise) of the study area.

- Raw material hub should be set up in both urban and rural areas so that the entrepreneurs can purchase required raw materials at lower prices.
- Workshop should be arranged in different places with the help of successful and renowned women entrepreneurs of different fields.
- Corruption and malpractices, which act as a major challenge for availing loan and other facilities from the respective agencies should be abolished by launching appropriate credit delivery-based incentive schemes for all the employees of that organisation. Strict vigilance is important for that.
- To enlarge the participation of women in small and medium enterprises a stronger coordinated role of government, financial institutions, NGOs, and educational institutions with an integrated approach is needed. Women need encouragement and support not only from the family members but also from the society, financial institutions, and government. Easy credit system, low rate of interest, collateral free and adequate marketing facilities should be available.
- To speed up women entrepreneurial activities, the first-generation women entrepreneurs should publicize their work and experiences. They must share their success stories in the newspaper, magazine, journals, e-journals, etc.
- Since the numerous challenges and opportunities provided to the women of 21st century is growing rapidly, so the job seekers are gradually turning into job creators. With the growing recognition that women have, unique talents, which could be harnessed for development and for creating employment opportunities for others, who are not suited for an entrepreneurial career, developing women as

entrepreneurs has become indispensable part of the national development planning and strategies. Therefore, policies and schemes that have been undertaken by the government should be formulated in such a way that the entrepreneurship among women could be increased with the pace of economic development in the 21st century.

This study has been divided into following chapters. The First chapter (Introductory in nature) deals with the concept and definition of entrepreneur and makes it clear that an entrepreneur is an individual who bears the risk of uncertainty in operating a business about future conditions and in turn rewarded accordingly by the outcome in terms of profits and losses.

This chapter also spells out the objectives of the study and explains the methodology adopted in the study. In this study, two types of data have been used; these are basically – primary data and secondary data. The second chapter consists of review of literature which is categorising as international, national, and north eastern perspectives. As the present inquiry is concerned with the challenges of women entrepreneurs, an attempt is made here to review the earlier studies on barriers of women entrepreneurs so that greater insight into the subject is obtained. The third chapter consists of socio-economic condition of women entrepreneurs. The demography of Sonitpur district is not entirely homogeneous as several linguistic, religious and ethnic communities and groups live. Due to existence of multicultural ethnic groups, the possibility of women entrepreneurship is high in different fields such as traditional as well as non-traditional sectors. The fourth chapter consists of women entrepreneurship and infrastructural facilities in the study area. Though infrastructure facilities are not developed and sufficient, yet women entrepreneurs are moving ahead in all spheres. They are not only venturing into traditional business idea but are ready to explore various non-traditional fields and prove their best capacity. The fifth chapter includes interest of women entrepreneur in traditional business as well as non-traditional business. The sixth chapter focusses on impacts of government

policies and schemes on entrepreneurship development among women. The seventh chapter includes the role of financial institutions in the development of women entrepreneurship. The eighth chapter consist of challenges of women entrepreneurship in the study area. The most important common problems of women entrepreneurs are paucity of adequate finance, lack of proper business knowledge, lack of knowledge about government policies and schemes for women entrepreneurship, social and cultural problem, lack of training facility, lack of family support, lack of self-confidence, marketing problems, fear of success, gender bias, lack of awareness among women, etc. Studies have shown that women are less likely to perceive themselves as entrepreneurs and avoid training and courses targeted at entrepreneurs. The impact of family life and childcare, as well as a lack of high-profile role models, are other limiting factors in the society. Chapter nine focusses on analysis and results. Tenth chapter includes suggestions and recommendations and direction of future research. Eleventh chapter includes bibliography.

Key words: Entrepreneurship, Motivation, opportunities, Optimum utilisation, transformation, recognition.