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Entrepreneurial activities of women in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

The present study was conducted in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. From this district five panchayat samities were selected purposlvely based on geographical division. Further from these panchayat samities 37 villages were selected for the accomplishment of the study. The results of the study revealed that out of 180 women majority of them (63.4%) had their inclination towards agro based entrepreneurial activities. This is so because these were easy to manage, require low skill and even less investment in running of these activities. It was also reported by majority of the women (86.1%) that they had entered in the entrepreneurial world so as to provide financial support to their family.

Introduction

Rural women in India constitute an important work force in agriculture. More than half of world's food is produced by them. In developing countries women in rural areas are engaged not only in household chores and child care, but also in farm work and more than 80 per cent of food consumed in household is provided by women. Even then they are traditionally undervalued and undercounted and are yet not in the mainstream of development.

Women's development has been the major issue in India. Now it is widely realized that India's potential cannot be harnessed unless women become equal partner in development. For that, women must get economically empowered and the system and ideology which keep them subordinate and neglected need to be dismantled. For this the best option is to create entrepreneurship among women to unleash the energy and to take rapid strides on the path of the trade and commercialization, raising employment opportunities and improving their livelihoods and move ahead in the road of development.

At present both state and central government are giving incentives, subsidies and concessions to the entrepreneurs to start small scale entrepreneurial activities. Hence the study was conducted to explore the entrepreneurial activities performed by the rural women of the area and the reasons thereof for choosing the particular activity and getting entered in the entrepreneurial world in general.

Material and Methods

For the present study to be accomplished Kangra district was divided into five geographical zones and from each of these one panchayat samiti was selected purposively exhibiting varied and maximum number of entrepreneurial activities. From the selected panchayat samities again a comprehensive list of villages exhibiting entrepreneurial activities was prepared. Thus a total comprising of 37 villages, from where a sample of 180 women entrepreneurs using proportionate random sampling technique (i.e 50 % of women entrepreneurs from each of the identified entrepreneurial activity) was drawn for carrying the study.

Results and Discussion

1. Profile of rural women entrepreneurs

Type of enterprise: Data in Table 1 reveals that in general out of 180 women entrepreneurs majority of them (63.3%) were engaged in agro-based units which included sericulture (20%), mushroom cultivation (15%), dairy (11.7%), vegetable cultivation (10%) and food processing and preservation (6.6%). Nearly one-third (36.7%) of them were engaged in craft related activities viz. tailoring (11.7%), embroidery (5.0%), knitting (5.6%), weaving (6.1%) and manufacturing of bamboo articles (8.3%).

This shows that women were engaged mainly in agro- based enterprises. Their inclination behind taking up these activities was that these occupations were of traditional nature in which women already had experience in

carrying out the activities. Easy availability of raw material within their periphery, less financial requirement, less time demanding, being carried out easily without affecting the household chores, lesser gestation period and less risky might be the other reasons for taking up agricultural based activities. Whereas craft related activities are skill oriented and require more time and perfection to learn. Thus, it can be said that for promoting any entrepreneurial activity by government and non- government organizations all theses points should be kept in mind.

The findings of the study get decisive support from the findings of Backiyavathy (2004) who reported that nearly 84 per cent of all economically active women in India were engaged in agriculture and allied activities. Similarly Shobha *et al.* (1995) reported that sericulture was one such self- employment avenue which facilitates rural women to improve their economic situation to a considerable extent.

Year of establishment: Table 1 indicates that before 1990 the number of women engaged in entrepreneurial activities were negligible (3.7%). It was in consonance with the general feeling that earning income was the privilege of only men. However data clearly depict that the trend changed slowly during the period of 1990-1997 as the percentage of women engaged in entrepreneurial activities increased from 3.7 to 28.3 per cent. It changed still better during the period of 1997- 2003 as 45.6 per cent had started the entrepreneurial activity in this period. The reason for it might be that after women empowerment year (2001), due to the efforts of various Government and Non- government organizations, women themselves had realized the importance of hauling the income generating activities and thereby becoming economically empowered. Therefore sharp increase in percentage of respondents has been noticed for the last 3-6 years.

Time devoted in the activity: It was encouraging to note from the Table 1 that nearly forty per cent of the respondents spent 5-8 hours daily in the activities like food preservation and processing, dairy, vegetable cultivation, tailoring and embroidery and knitting and weaving. Nearly one- third of them (30.6%) engaged in sericulture, disburse about 8-10 hrs a day particularly at 3rd and 4th stage of worm moulting. Rest 25.6 per cent of the respondents were spending 3-5 hrs/ day on mushroom cultivation and manufacturing of bamboo articles.

These findings portray that the women spent huge amount of time on these activities alongwith their household chores. This shows that they have a double burden on them, which may lead to drudgery. Hence there is a need to create awareness and generate new technologies related to these enterprises so as to reduce drudgery of the women and save their time, which may in turn lead to the adoption of another income generating activity in the saved time period.

Mode of ownership: Visualization of Table 1 reveals that a majority of the respondents (68.4 %), especially engaged in agro-based activities were doing the activities individually, 18.3 per cent engaged in almost all craft based activities had mixed ownership (sole proprietorship+ group) and a very few respondents were running the activities of food processing and preservation in group and co-operative form, respectively. Only 5 per cent of the respondents engaged in knitting, weaving and embroidary had entered in these activities as wage earners. The reason for conducting the activities independently was to avoid unwanted crisis and conflicts and to have full-fledged share of profit. Besides there is the flexibility in running the enterprise. In resemblance to the above findings, Seema *et al.* (2002) in a study on 15 women entrepreneurs reported that 86.66 per cent of women were running their units as sole proprietors while 13.34 per cent in partnership.

2. Reasons for selecting a particular product line: Table 2 depicts that out of the total respondents (180), maximum number of the respondents (36) had taken up production of cocoons from silkworm rearing. They had chosen this particular enterprise because it was easy to carry out, as reported by 61.1 per cent respondents. Nearly 50 and 30 per cent of women had ventured into this enterprise as it was the most promising and an ideally suited activity to the rural socio-economic development due to minimum or no investment. This was due to the possession of all the required facilities like mulberry leaves, newspapers, etc. Next to sericulture was mushroom cultivation in which 27 respondents were engaged. They ventured this activity as it was easy to manage alongwith their household responsibilities. About 80 per cent of them

had selected this enterprise as there was no chance of getting it affected by wild animals and natural calamities. Dairying and vegetable cultivation were other agro based

Table 1. Profile of entrepreneurial activities performed by women N= 180

S. N.	Characteristics	Frequency	% age
1.	Type of enterprise/unit		
a)	Agro-based	114	63.4
i)	Sericulture	36	20.0
ii)	Mushroom cultivation	27	15.0
iii)	Dairy	21	11.7
iv)	Veg. cultivation	18	10.0
v)	Food processing and preservation	12	6.6
b)	Craft based:	66	36.7
i)	Tailoring	21	11.7
ii)	Embroidery	9	5.0
iii)	Knitting	10	5.6
iv)	Weaving	11	6.1
v)	Bamboo articles	15	8.3
2.	Duration of establishment		
a)	3-6 year	82	45.6
b)	6-9 year	51	28.3
c)	9-12 year	35	19.4
d)	12 years and above	12	3.7
3.	Time devoted in the activity		
a)	3-5 hrs/day	46	25.6
b)	5-8 hrs/day	79	43.8
c)	8-10 hrs/day	55	30.6
4.	Mode of ownership		
a)	Sole proprietorship	123	68.4
b)	Group/cooperative venture	15	8.3
c)	Mixed (group+ sole roprietorship)	33	18.3
d)	Wage earner	9	5.0

activities, which were taken up by 21 and 18 per cent of the respondents, respectively with the reason that these activities were their traditional occupations and were compatible to their inherent routine chores. Those respondents who were venturing food processing and preservation, tailoring and embroidery enterprises mentioned high demand of the product as the major reason for selecting these enterprises. With respect to knitting and weaving, the respondents (66.9%) revealed that these activities could be carried out within their homes at free time without affecting their routine chores. Manufacturing of bamboo articles was undertaken because of its low investment and traditional work as reported by 60 and 40 per cent respondents, respectively.

The findings of the study get decisive support from Seema *et al.* (1998) that majority of respondents had selected various income generating activities due to high demand, past experience and possession of skills.

3. Reasons for initiating enterprise: Women become entrepreneurs due to several reasons, which may be grouped under "pull reasons" and "Push reasons". Pull reasons refers to the urge in women to undertake a venture with an inclination to start a business. Women entering business, driven by financial needs due to family circumstances are said to be influenced by push reasons Table 3 depicts that women had taken up the entrepreneurial carrier mostly due to the push reasons. Like a majority of the women had taken up the entrepreneurial career "to provide financial support", when additional responsibility was entrusted on them due to family circumstances. Rest 2.8-6.2 per cent of the women had ventured in entrepreneurial world due to the reasons of "not having any other source of income", "to continue family business" and husband's disability or bad habits/death".

Majority of the women (76.7%) had also reported that apart from push reasons, they had also been pulled by a desire "to become independent". Nearly one-tenth (17.2 %) of the respondents had entered in the entrepreneurial world to make "best utilization of their leisure time".In support of the above findings Das (2003) had stated that majority of the women had got themselves engaged in the entrepreneurial activity with a reason to earn income.

Thus, it can be concluded that women are more oriented towards those activities which match to their background, require low investment, less time and above all which are not highly skill oriented. The women had started entering in the entrepreneurial world to meet out their family need as due to development the living standard of families are also improving day by day and hence there is a need of earning income by two, instead of depending wholly on the male counter part to meet out the basic needs.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of respondents by reasons for selecting a particular product line

Reasons	Sericulture n=36	Mushroom cultivation n=27	Dairy n=21	Vegetable cultivation n=18	Food processing & preserv. n=12	Tailoring and embroi-dery n=30	Knitting and weaving n=21	Bamboo articles n=15
Easy to carry	22 (61.1)		6 (28.6)	6 (33.3)	6 (50)	18 (60)	5 (23.8)	
Managed at household level		15 (83.3)	4 (19.0)			12 (40)	14 (66.9)	
Possess required facilities	14 (38.9)		5 (23.8)	6 (33.3)				
Low/no investment	20 (55.6)				6 (50)			9 (60)
Indoor activity		12 (80.0)				10 (33.3)	2 (9.5)	
Traditional work			21 (100)	18 (100)			4 (19.0)	6 (40)
Dual benefit perceived			4 (19.0)	18 (100)				
High demand					10 (83.3)	20 (66.7)		

* Figures in parentheses represent frequencies

Table 3. Percentage distribution of respondents as per the reasons reported for initiating an enterprise

N= 180

S. No	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Pull reasons:		
a)	Idle time	31	17.2
b)	To become independent	138	76.7
2.	Push reasons:		
a)	To support family	155	86.1
b)	To continue family business	10	5.6
c)	Husband's disability/ bad habits/death	12	6.2
d)	Don't have any other source of income	5	2.8

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