

# AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE CULTURAL BARRIERS IMPACTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** *Entrepreneurship is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that involves value creation and considered as a driving force of economic development. Entrepreneurship is one of the growing trends, and studies are focusing on it generally not only at the national but also at the global level.* **Objectives:** *To explore the cultural barriers in various Indian communities that limits the movement of women towards entrepreneurship in the hospitality business and suggest ways to overcome such barriers for women development.* **Methodology:** *The research design of the study was both qualitative and quantitative. The present study was conducted in Kolkata. The sample was collected from 43 female entrepreneur associated with various hotel oriented business using the convenience sampling technique. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data.* **Results:** *The study found that 32.6% of the female entrepreneurs faced financial issue as one of the biggest challenge. It was also found that 44.2% of women did not have the freedom to market the product. 25.6% of the women entrepreneurs mentioned that family commitment always affected the business performance. 44.2% of women were of the opinion that they faced psychological challenges in dealing with men in the hospitality sector. Majority of women (around 51.2%) faced problems in availing the facility of government funds whereas around (50.5%) faced challenges in loan sanctions.* **Conclusion:** *It was found that family and societal commitments and domination of men in the society in terms of business were key factors to the hindrances Support from the government and formulation of policies can be a matter of great help in this regard.*

**Key Words:** *Women Entrepreneurship, Indian Culture, Cultural Barriers, Hospitality Industry.*

## INTRODUCTION

*“Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world”-Hillary Clinton*

Entrepreneurship is one of the most trending terms in the modern days and involves thinking of something innovative and conversion of these ideas to business. The early history of entrepreneurship in India is largely associated with the country's culture customs and traditions. Entrepreneurship often is known to spin around social behaviors (Rizvi & Gupta, 2009). A woman who is known to organize and

operate a business, especially an organization is referred to as a business woman. Woman entrepreneur is an individual or group of individuals who start or operate a business. About one-third of the entrepreneurs that are known to exist in the world today are found to be women.

As per the guidelines framed by the government of India in regards to entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs need to have a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and give 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women. According to the former president of India Dr. APJ

Abdul Kalam, empowerment is a prerequisite for building a good country, and when the women are empowered, it ensures a stable society. Women empowerment is essential as the thoughts and values of women lead to the development of a good family, a good society and finally a good country.

Women entrepreneurs are confident, innovative and creative and at the same point of time capable of creating self- economic independence. They are known to generate employment opportunities for others by keeping pace with personal, family and social life. The hospitality sector can help in the contribution a lot by filling the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries in regards to reaching the root level of economy.

The development of women entrepreneurship is low in India as compared to the other developing countries owing to a male dominated society in India. Women in India face a lot of challenges in starting a business. They have to take the permission of the head of the family and have to give proper time to family and business which prevents them from devoting full time to business. Normally women entrepreneurship in India is seen to be as a supplement of their kitchen activities in commercially preparing the 3 P's i.e. Pickles, Papads and Powders. Hardly, few of them are known to advance into the hospitality industry (Pradeepika, 2017).

The traditions and customs that prevail in a culturally diverse country like India sometimes stand as barriers in front of women when it comes to their growth and prosperity. Caste and religion dominate the Indian societies and stands as a hindrance to women entrepreneurship. In rural areas, too there are social barriers and women are seen with suspicious eyes.

Women in India face a lot of challenges in terms of society, culture and education when it comes to entrepreneurship and achieving the desired success. India with a country of diverse culture and customs limit the participation of women in businesses and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship quality in India is considered to be a male quality and seeing women as entrepreneurs is a different dream in India. Women face role conflicts when it comes to their entrepreneurial aspirations. Moreover, women who have

had several aspirations at the teenage level are not able to achieve them as and when they grow up as they turn up getting married and getting settled as housewives. Apart from these women face the problem of performing different roles as they do not have enough time to deal with family and business and it becomes a challenge for them to meet all the demands of the family and society at large. They face a lot of challenges in performing multitasking i.e. household work, time for education of children, personal hobbies, and leisure time with family and many more. In the rural areas women entrepreneurs are seen with apprehensive eyes owing to social barriers, caste and religion.

According to (Ali, 2016), the family plays a very important role when it comes to business, but lack of support and marital life restrict the women in achieving the desired success. According to (Raza et. al., 2020), it is hard for women to balance the personal and professional lives. (Crampton and Mishra, 1999) in their research found out that the boundaries imposed upon by the society, family and women themselves are a major obstacle to women entrepreneurship. Women are responsible for most of the household activities and that a man's job is considered more important. (Fagenson and Marcus, 1991) in their research study found out that entrepreneurship was characterized as more of a male thing and that men would be more likely to succeed than women in business.

In the last two decades the significant progress of women in the field of education has not translated into their improvement in employment. In many regions around the globe the employment rate of men are still more than that of women. As per ILO 'Women at Work-Trend 2016' report 25.8% were employed in comparison to 76.4% of men. Women in India also face more prejudices than their male counterpart, one of the most common being the inability to cope up with the pressure of the hospitality entrepreneurship business. According to (Al. Munajjed, 2019; Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017), females receive less appreciation than their male counterpart in starting a business owing to entrepreneurship being a male dominated thing and a lack of women's education and skill training.

According to (Chatterjee et. al., 2018) there is a lack of proper training or proper education for females compared

to males who receive a lot of skill training and education when it comes to entrepreneurship. According to (Mehtap et al., 2017), women are not given the same education and training opportunities as males enterprises in starting up a new business. Females are generally perceived as being submissive and obsequious to the male gender in the society. (Kamberidou, 2020) in her research found out that female entrepreneurs face a lot of hurdles in comparison to their male counterparts in the Indian traditional and patriarchal communities. According to (Ghosh, et al., 1998), societal and cultural values impinge on women entrepreneurs outside their homes, making it difficult to operate in a male dominated sphere. Women are obliged to make their work and home environments fit to run smoothly and pleasantly.

According to (Embran, 2003) in the study of women entrepreneurship in Kerala found that women entrepreneurs face a plethora of problems not only launching a business but also running them. According to (Setty, 2004), women has been the economic partner of man in several fields but when it comes to entrepreneurship, man seems to dominate the entrepreneurial world.

According to (Cromie and Hayes, 1988), married female business owners need to balance between career and family. Family is often seen to be an extension of women. The family expects married women to enter motherhood within a certain age and is expected to play a major role in rearing their children. All these leads to young mothers taking a break from their entrepreneurial careers and devoting time to their families Women are made to feel guilty on prioritizing business over family. According to (Kulkarni and Rao, 2022), women's literacy is one of the major barriers to women entrepreneurship and empowerment with women not able to complete their education owing to family responsibilities or getting married. In many regions across the country women in the house are restricted to interact with visitors or outsiders. Various religious issues like considering women impure while she is having her menstruation and lot letting women work on those days are major issues to women entrepreneurship.

In the past few years it has been observed that the number of firms created in various sectors by women have undergone faster growth compared to those set up by women. But still very less women entrepreneurs are found in the field of hospitality.

Although it is generally accepted that entrepreneurship is difficult for both men and women, the reasons for undertaking this research study is to ascertain the various cultural and social barriers to women entrepreneurship in India with reference to the hospitality sector. There is no doubt that females give new possibilities to economies coping with the problem of unemployment, yet they face constant challenges in their path to entrepreneurial success. If the world wants women entrepreneurs to make significant contribution towards the economy, it is important for all those who are associated to pay attention to such barriers hindering the progress of such enterprises and attempt to encourage and foster women empowerment. The objectives were:

- To learn about the various social and cultural challenges faces by women in the hospitality sector.
- To find out and explore the impact of such factors on the development of women entrepreneurship.
- To propose certain measures and changes as to overcoming these barriers for the success of women and women empowerment.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The research design undertaken in order to fulfill the purpose of the research involves quantitative.

**Locale:** The zone that was selected for the purpose of the sample selection was The City of Joy, Kolkata and few adjacent areas.

**Sample Design:** The data collection for the purpose of the research was done through convenience sampling method. Sample size was 43 respondents associated with various hospitality oriented business.

**Tools and Technique:** A well-structured questionnaire was designed for the purpose of the data collection for the survey. The questionnaire was framed on some closed ended questions and some on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 indicating never and 5 indicating always.

**Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis:** Data analysis was done on the response provided by women entrepreneur working in hospitality sector. The data collected for the research study was analyzed using the frequency tabulation and percentages based on graphical representations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Demography of subjects:** Regarding the demographic profile of the respondents 51.2% of female entrepreneurs were found in the age group of 26-40 years with 51.2% being married. From the data in association with qualification level of the respondents it is clearly understood that many of the entrepreneurs did not have the sufficient education, knowledge and skills in terms of entrepreneurship. They might have opted for entrepreneurship due to various barriers in the society or may be due to family pressure or to support their family. Due to the lack of sufficient knowledge and skills these women might have succeeded in their business but were not able to rise much higher in their entrepreneurial activity.

Early marriages and family responsibilities are main reasons for insufficient education in the tourism and hospitality sector for women in the Indian society. Even today, the percentage of women associated with higher education in the field of tourism and hospitality is comparatively less as compared to men in this sector.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents**

Age	Frequency (43)	Percentage
15-25	12	27.9
26-40	22	51.2
41-50	09	20.9
51+	0	0
Marital Status		
Married	22	51.2
Unmarried	21	48.8
Highest Level of Education		
10th	02	4.7
12th	11	25.6
Graduation	24	55.8
Post Graduation	06	14

**Table 2: Reasons for starting the business**

Reasons	Frequency (43)	Percentage
Experience of working in this field	08	18.6
Hobby	10	23.3
A means to survive in the society	09	20.9
Doing something new	11	25.6
Others	05	11.6

The survey that was conducted indicated that 25.6% of women started business because of doing something new, while 20.9% of women started business as a means to survive in the society. It also showed that 23.3% of women started business as a hobby while 18.6% started their business in order to gain experience in the field. The above table is very much indicative of the fact that the choice of doing business in a male dominated society is mainly due to a means to survive in the society which is also quite indicative from their highest level of educational qualification.

**Table 3: Challenges faced during the start of the business**

Challenges	Frequency (43)	Percentage
No obstacles	02	04.6
Financial issues	14	32.6
Lack of information	10	23.3
Support to family	12	27.9
Maintaining personal and professional issues	05	11.6

The starting of a business by women involves various socio- cultural barriers as indicated throughout the research. Various issues associated with finance, lack of information and support from the family as well as keeping personal and professional issues tend to stand as a barrier for women opting to go for business in the field of hospitality. Of all these barriers support of the members of the family along with financial issues and lack of information due to insufficient education, skills and knowledge tend to be major reasons. The survey conducted for the purpose of the research indicated that 32.6% of women faced financial issues as a challenge to women entrepreneurship while 27.9% of women did to get the family support to start a business. Moreover 23.3% of women did not have adequate information in starting a business while the rest faced personal issues in this regard.

**Table 4: Socio-Cultural Challenges faced by Women Entrepreneur**

Socio – Cultural Challenges	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Freedom from family to market the products directly to the consumers	19	42.2	09	20.9	06	14.0	07	16.3	02	4.7
Permission to go beyond village for Marketing purpose	17	39.5	08	18.6	09	20.9	03	07.0	06	14.0
Effect of family commitments on business performance	09	20.9	11	25.6	09	20.9	03	07.0	11	25.6
Psychological challenges in dealing with men in Hospitality Sector	02	4.7	03	07.0	04	09.3	15	34.9	19	44.2
Problems in meeting group norms due to social barriers	03	07.0	05	11.6	02	04.7	10	23.3	23	53.5
Getting funds from government is a long and cumbersome process	01	02.3	04	09.3	03	07.0	13	30.2	22	51.2
Government officials expect favors for sanctioning loans	02	04.7	01	02.3	03	07.0	11	25.6	26	60.5
Lack of adequate knowledge and awareness on using technologies	08	18.6	12	27.9	05	11.6	10	23.3	08	18.6

\*1 to 5 with 1 indicating never and 5 indicating always.

India is a land of varied cultures and customs and is known to contribute a lot to the world economy. Women in India today are succeeding in the various sectors of the economy. But still today women face challenges in terms of not getting the family support in entrepreneurial activities. Marketing has always been a key aspect in the success of any business but women lack in it not only in terms of knowledge but also when it comes to the support from family members in marketing their products directly to consumers. Women are not allowed to go beyond villages for business purpose or marketing and promotional activities. Many families, especially those residing in villages are still very reserved and conservative in this regard. The survey that was conducted it was found that 44.2% of women did not have the freedom to market the product whereas 4.7% of women had. It was also found that 39.5% of women did not get permission to go beyond their village for marketing purpose whereas 14% of women did get.

Women entrepreneurs especially those who are married are not just committed to their business but also to their family life. They really find it difficult to balance between their personal and professional life leading to stagnancy in their business. They struggle to devote time to their business or think of new and innovative ideas to progress. As per the survey 20.9% of women agreed to the fact that family commitments did affect their business performance whereas 20.9% of women were neutral in this matter.

Indian society has always been a male dominated society with male mostly responsible for working outside their homes and women involved in taking care of the household activities. Right from the elderly men being the head of the family to men leading the various sectors of the economy there has been an impact of male chauvinism across societies in the country. Dealing with men in the various areas of hospitality turns out to be a big psychological challenge. The research study indicated that 44.2% of women were of the opinion that they faced psychological challenges in dealing with men in the hospitality sector. As is indicated from the above table 4 53.5% said that women entrepreneur faced problems in meeting the group norms due to social barriers.

The government of India as well as the various state governments have come up with various schemes in support of women entrepreneurship in India in various sectors. In the field of hospitality though there are existence of female entrepreneurs but the numbers are still quite small owing to the cumbersome process in the sanctioning of funds from the government. Even in many cases government officials are accused of expecting favors in exchange of loans. Majority of women (around 51.2%) faced problems in availing the facility of government funds whereas around (50.5%) faced challenges in loan sanctions Statistics depict that women lacked the required knowledge and skills as well as awareness on the use of modern technologies in business though few of them had were expected to have adequate knowledge.

Women empowerment in India is the need of the hour. Many women across the country are equally intelligent and talented as men but do waste most of their skills by indulging in household chores. Women need to be empowered and given the freedom to shape their personal and professional life. The government of India in this regard must ensure that every girl in the society seeks education, which is a stepping stone to empowerment, through the government schemes. It is also very necessary to educate and sensitize men about the need to educate and empower women in the country.

It is not just the men but also the women in the society who pulls down the other women rather than appreciating them for their effort and courage in dealing with social and cultural issues in their path to entrepreneurship. It is thus necessary to support and help each other in growing rather than criticizing each other in order to make a better society. It is thus necessary to bring more and more women into entrepreneurship in this sector in order to uplift the sector and develop the nation and society as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

The hospitality and hotel industry provides ample amount of prospects for female entrepreneurs compared to other sectors of the economy. However women are not found to occupy a dominant position as self-employed workers in this sector.

Entrepreneurship may not guarantee the discrimination on females. A paradigm shift and a combined effort from those entire associated can help eradicate or reduce the existing barriers facing women entrepreneurship to some extent. In order to achieve the desired goal and enhance or ensure women empowerment, gender sensitive policies need to be introduced and made aware of. Moreover the need to create a favorable environment for women entrepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality sector needs to be recognized.

Finally, as entrepreneurs women need to keep fighting in order to get recognized. It is also very necessary to remember that women do not have to be a man to succeed and that to thrive on the uniqueness of being a successful woman in business. It is also very important to not allow negativities to influence one's career path and let anything stand as a barrier to the path of success.

The present research looked into various cultural barrier to

women entrepreneurship in hospitality. Further research can be conducted in appraising the various government policies and schemes to women entrepreneurship in hospitality. The research can further look into the aspects of inclusive growth and women empowerment.

Further research on this could be conducted by involving male entrepreneurs in the field of hospitality and then comparing the various similarities and differences in barriers experienced between the genders. Moreover research can be conducted on the relationship of women entrepreneurs with the players in the environment associated with the public and private entrepreneurs.

The research study conducted involved certain limitations in terms of the composition of the sample selection. Since the inclusion of all female entrepreneurs in the field of hospitality across the country of India is too large, a sample was selected to investigate in order to fulfill the purpose of the research few of them being from close contacts. Moreover few of the entrepreneurs approached for the purpose of the research refused to contribute owing to various personal and social issues.

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