Chapter 9

Contemporary Perspectives on Women Entrepreneurship in India

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ABSTRACT

An entrepreneur is a person who initiates and establishes an enterprise. Entrepreneurship refers to the decisions one takes in setting up and running a new enterprise. The individual constitutes the most important element in entrepreneurship. This individual who decides to be an entrepreneur can be a “HE” or “SHE.” So though the word “Entrepreneur” does not discriminate between genders, yet there is an underlying thread which is of interest to researchers and practitioners alike to study “women entrepreneurship.” Because of the economic restructuring and societal acceptance more women have started establishing enterprises. Being women for whom the social barriers are now breaking and acceptance coming, one should say that women entrepreneurship is in its infancy and transitional period. Due to this fact, it has its own unique facets. Based on in depth literature review and grounded theory approach, this chapter intends to explore factors which influence women entrepreneurship and provide contemporary perspectives on women entrepreneurship in the Indian context.

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INTRODUCTION

An entrepreneur is a person who initiates and establishes an enterprise. Entrepreneurship refers to the decisions one takes in setting up and running a new enterprise. The individual constitutes the most important element in entrepreneurship. It is an individual who takes a decision to start or not to start an enterprise. It can be a ‘HE’ or ‘SHE’ who strives, to make it a success. So though the word “Entrepreneur” does not discriminate between genders, yet there is an underlying thread which is of interest to researchers and practitioners alike to study ‘women entrepreneurship’ (Baporikar, 2013). This is because of the economic restructuring and societal acceptance more and more women have started establishing enterprises. Being women for whom the social barriers are now breaking and acceptance coming, one can say that women entrepreneurship is in its infancy and transitional period especially in India (Baporikar, 2014). Due to this fact, it has its own unique facets. Based on in depth literature review and grounded theory approach, this chapter intends to explore factors which influence women entrepreneurship and provide contemporary perspectives on women entrepreneurship in the Indian context.

BACKGROUND

According to the Global Entrepreneurship monitor (GEM) study in 67 countries, there are 126 million women entrepreneurs in the world. In most countries, entrepreneurship levels for women are lower than that for males except in in Panama, Thailand, Ghana, Ecuador, Nigeria and Uganda. The female entrepreneurship rates differ among developed and developing economies and even for economies at the similar stages of economic development. For example, in Zambia, 40 percent of women are engaged in entrepreneurial activity whereas only 1% of women in Pakistan are entrepreneurs (GEM, 2014; Niethammer, Saeed, Sidi, and Charafi, 2007). The entrepreneurial rates in different countries are influenced by the social status of the women in the specific cultural and religious context. To explain the variation, one has to look at both the Individual-centric approach and country-specific approach since individuals operate in a specific context (Singh, 2012). Female entrepreneurship is a reflection of the societal context where the business is located (Pathak, Goltz and Buche, 2013).

Historically, women entrepreneurs have gravitated towards consumer, retail and service sectors, and avoided capital-intensive manufacturing sector (OECD, 2001). In developing economies most women become entrepreneurs by starting businesses out of necessity, as it’s the only way they can earn a living. However, women entrepreneurs are active in all the sectors including the necessity-driven, efficiency-driven and
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