

# **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MICRO ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A STUDY OF GANJAM DISTRICT OF ODISHA**

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**Abstract:** Women constitute about fifty percent of the total population of India. The prosperity and well-being of our nation is possible only when the women folk develop. In traditional Indian societies, they were confined to four walls but in recent years, they come out to participate in all types of activities including entrepreneurship. In India empowering women through entrepreneurship has become an integral part of our development efforts because it directly helps women development, Economic growth, Social stability and self-esteem. Income generation activities through entrepreneurship development are a feasible solution for empowering women as it provides feasible working hours according to the need of the homemakers. The present study is conducted to analyse the contribution by women entrepreneurs and also to find out the current problems faced by them in their business. The study was conducted in Ganjam District of Odisha where number of women entrepreneurs is highest. Digapahandi Block of the district was chosen as this block has highest number of women entrepreneurs. One Panchayat having highest number of women entrepreneurs was chosen. Four villages from this panchayat was selected randomly. Food based micro enterprises like Pickle, dry fish, badi, papad, chanachur, etc. were chosen for the study. 30 women entrepreneurs were randomly selected from each village. Statistical tools like tables, graphs, correlation and binary indexation techniques were used for analysing data. The study found that there exists a weak correlation between age and return on investment but strong correlation between initial expenditure and return on investment. The Financial Empowerment Index has a moderate value. This is so because the women of that area have a good hold over the finance of the family as they manage the daily expenditure of the family as the men don't pay any heed to it. These women also faced many types of constraints while running their enterprise such as traditional mind-set of elder members, family restrictions, shortage of finance, lack of skill and training, marketing etc. The study suggested that various skill development programmes along with more number of gender sensitive schemes should implemented to boost women entrepreneurship in the region.

**Introduction:** Women constitute about fifty percent of the total population of India. The prosperity and well-being of our nation is possible only when the women folk develop. In traditional Indian societies, they were confined to four walls but in recent years, they come out to participate in all types of activities including entrepreneurship. In India empowering women through entrepreneurship has become an integral part of our development efforts because it directly helps women development, Economic growth, Social stability and self-esteem. Income generation activities through entrepreneurship development are a feasible solution for empowering women as it provides feasible working hours according to the need of the homemakers. Women entrepreneurship is the process where women initiate direct and manage an enterprise and offer employment opportunities to other. Women entrepreneurs considered to be most significant economic agents for development of the nation. They are the owners, producers, coordinators, sellers, decision makers, risk takers, innovators etc. Now-a-days women have to supplement the family income using their potential and dexterity that they possess. Their skills and competencies may be sharpened by way of training so that they can successfully start their enterprise and earn their livelihood.

**Literature Review:** Dwivedi & Dwivedi, (2011) analysed the contribution and problems faced by women entrepreneurs in their business in Faizabad Zone of Uttar Pradesh. Present study is based on primary data. They have taken 17 women entrepreneurs who are running beauty parlour. They found that women entrepreneurs in this sector has a good scope to develop and earn good amount after doing Diploma or Certificate courses. As experience increases with age, their investment increases subsequently increasing rate of return on investment.

Sharma & Varma, (2008) investigated the empowerment of women of Haryana state through participation in selected entrepreneurial activities of SHGs. A random selection was done of 16 SHGs from 8 villages of 4 blocks from 2 districts. Data collection was done with the help of pre-tested structured interview schedule from 183 respondents. By using correlation and dummy variable modelling, the study revealed that entrepreneurial activities help an increase in recognition of self, status of family in society, size of social circle and investment in intra family and entrepreneurial decision making.

Bhattacharjee,(2016) explored the style of leadership and investigated the effectiveness of operation of micro financing self-help groups in the rural areas of Haringhata Block, Nadia district, West Bengal. She examined and analyse the role of the women of the group contributing to the society without the help of male counterparts and their relationship with the leader. A case study method was adopted. Group following a participative leadership follow proper communication skills, have ability to integrate people, believe in position behaviour and a transformation attitude and contribute towards encouragement for entrepreneurship. She also found that the participative or democratic style is the most effective medium to operate the system of micro financing SHGs.

Rai, (2016) along with CARE implemented the Women's leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises (WLSME) program at Panruti in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu in the Cashew industry. The key objective of the program is to promote women's leadership and sustainable growth of 210 women owned and managed cashew processing SMEs. The type of data collected was primary. 210 SMEs were selected for this purpose. This study concludes that women's collectives have a special role to play in encouraging female entrepreneurship. The grievances discussed here further points to the fact that an increase in female participation in the sector particularly through decision making and managerial roles as entrepreneurs would foster a better work culture, a better grievance redressal for the female employees and an overall creation of an enabling environment for harnessing women's participation and leadership.

Mehrotra's (2016) paper focuses on the institutionalisation and progress of women in the entrepreneurship journey and the challenges faced by them while pursuing their goals, schemes to support the journey and solutions. The researcher has used Secondary Data mostly using journals and research papers. It is a literary review of many researchers. Women entrepreneurship is seen as an effective strategy to eradicate rural and urban poverty. Growing evidence asserts that women's entrepreneurial leadership while differentiated is fundamentally different from men's.

**Objectives:** The major objectives of the study are:

- To show the relationship between Age, Initial Investment and Average Yearly Income of the women entrepreneurs in my study area.
- To show the Financial Empowerment Index of the women entrepreneurs in my study area

**Methodology:** The present study is conducted to analyse the contribution by women entrepreneurs and also to find out the current problems faced by them in their business. The study was conducted in Ganjam District of Odisha where number of women entrepreneurs is highest. Digapahandi Block of the district was chosen as this block has highest number of women entrepreneurs. One Panchayat having highest number of women entrepreneurs was chosen. Four villages from this panchayat was selected randomly. Food based micro enterprises like Pickle, dry fish, badi, papad, chanachur, etc. were chosen for the study. 30 women entrepreneurs were randomly selected from each village. Statistical tools like tables, graphs, correlation and binary indexation techniques were used for analysing data.

**Results and Discussion: Education, Caste and Marital Status:** Table-1 presents the distribution of the respondents as per their level of education by caste and marital status. Here the highest level of education attained by the respondents is Higher Secondary. Maximum number of respondents belonged to the OBC category. Least number of respondents belonged to the SC category. In case of marital status maximum respondents were married, i.e. 92 and 12 respondents fall in the widow category.

**Table 1: Education, Caste and Marital Status of the Respondents**

Education	Caste			Total	Marital Status			Total
	General	OBC	SC		Married	Unmarried	Widow	
Illiterate	8	24	8	40	32	-	8	40
Lower Primary	8	12	8	28	28	-	-	28
Upper Primary	4	4	8	16	12	4	-	16
Secondary	12	12	4	28	16	8	4	28
Higher Secondary	4	4	-	8	4	4	-	8
Total	36	56	28	120	92	16	12	120

Source: Primary Data

**Social Status, Status in family and Future Planning of the Respondents:** Table 2: shows the distribution of respondents on the basis of their social status with respect to their status in family and their future planning regarding their enterprise. The status is categorised as Very Good, Good, Standard and Poor. Status in Family is assigned on the basis of 4 questions asked in each case. The response was noted in yes or no format. Respondent who gave 4 yes responses was assigned Very Good status followed by Good for 3 and so on.

**Table 2: Social Status, Status in family and Future Planning of the Respondents**

Social Status	Status in Family				Total	Future Planning		Total
	Very Good	Good	Standard	Poor		Positive and Ambitious	Negative and Dormant	
Very Good	16	8	-	-	24	24	-	24
Good	8	40	20	4	72	68	4	72
Standard	-	4	4	8	16	16	-	16
Poor	-	-	4	4	8	-	8	8
Total	24	52	28	16	120	108	12	120

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents as per their bank account possession, sources of finance and their financial literacy. The assignment of a standard or poor financial literacy was done on the basis of few questions being asked to them regarding the possession and usage of few financial instruments and services. None of the respondents had a Good or Very Good financial literacy hence only standard and poor values are assigned to them. The table showed that maximum respondents had a Poor financial literacy and had a bank account of their own. Among them again maximum respondents had obtained finance from the formal sources of finance. This also depicts despite a poor financial literacy the respondents preferred a formal source of finance over the informal one.

**Table 3: Bank Account Possession, Financial Literacy and Sources of Finance**

Bank A/c Possession		Financial Literacy		Sources of Finance	
Yes	No	Standard	Poor	Formal	Informal
116	4	48	68	64	52
		-	4	-	4

Source: Primary Data

**Relation between Age, Initial Investment and Average Yearly Income :**

**Correlation Analysis:** Table 4 shows the correlation between age, initial investment and average yearly income of the respondents. The results showed that *there exists a weak correlation between age and return on investment but strong correlation between initial expenditure and return on investment.* We can observe that r between Age (Average) and Initial Expenditure is 0.354927411 which implies there exists a weak correlation between age and initial expenditure. Moreover there also exists a weak correlation among Age and Average Yearly Income (i.e. 0.228881159). But there exists a strong correlation between Initial Expenditure and Average Yearly Income i.e. about 0.965757944.

**Table 3:** Correlation between Age, Initial Investment and Average Yearly Income

	Age (Average)	Initial Expenditure	Average Yearly Income
Age (Average)	1		
Initial Expenditure	0.354927411	1	
Average Yearly Income	0.228881159	0.965757944	1

Source: Primary Data

**Financial Empowerment:** This aspect shows the level of empowerment of the women entrepreneurs regarding mainly the financial indicators. Ten such indicators were taken. They are *Easy availability of loan, Control over money, Personal income, Supplement family income, Profitability of enterprise, any other source of income, Feeling secured and Independent, Skill development, Bank account possession and Standard financial literacy.* Response regarding these indicators was taken on the basis of either a yes or a no. As the response has only two categories so I have used the binary indexation technique. In binary indexation technique a value of 1 is assigned to the positive (i.e. Yes) response and 0 to the negative (i.e. No) response. Accordingly the total value of each respondent was summed up and put in the form of a table which is shown below. The total value assigned column depicts the summation of the responses of each respective women entrepreneur with regard to all the 10 indicators. Then a simple average of these indices or the total value assigned column represents the financial empowerment index of the selected women entrepreneurs in the study area.

Indicators	Response		Total
	Yes	No	
Easy availability of loan	84	36	120
Control over money	84	36	120
Personal income	92	28	120
Supplement family income	72	48	120
Profitability of enterprise	112	8	120
Any other source of income	80	40	120
Feeling secured and independent	108	12	120
Skill development	64	56	120
Bank account Possession	116	4	120
Standard financial literacy	48	72	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>1200</b>

The financial empowerment index is  $860/1200=0.72$

If the empowerment index is closer to 1 then we can say that there is strong empowerment level and if the value is closer to 0 then there is a weak empowerment level. In our data the empowerment index is 0.72 which is just a bit higher than half so we can say that there is moderate empowerment level of the women entrepreneurs after they have started their enterprise.

**Findings and Concluding Observations:** From the above study it is observed that there exists a very weak correlation in between age and initial expenditure & age and average yearly income. This implies that in the study area age doesn't put a significant impact upon the initial expenditure and average yearly income of the entrepreneurs. But there is a very strong correlation in between initial expenditure and average yearly income of the women entrepreneurs. This shows as initial or subsequent investment increases, average yearly income of the entrepreneurs also increases. Initial expenditure put a significant impact upon the average yearly income of the entrepreneurs. The financial empowerment index of the women entrepreneurs is also moderate and more than average. This depicts that this entrepreneurship has helped women to achieve at least a sound empowerment financially. This empowerment index was found by collecting the response of women to various financial empowerment indicators with the impact being felt after the venturing of their business. It reflects the empowerment being attained after they underwent this business. During my focussed group discussion, women entrepreneurs cited various problems they faced in running their business like traditional mind-set of elder members, family restrictions, shortage of finance, lack of skill and training, marketing etc. The study suggested that various skill development programmes along with more number of gender sensitive schemes should implemented to boost women entrepreneurship in the region.

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