

Motivational Factors and Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs in Assam : An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

The movement of entrepreneurship promotion and development in the past few decades has gone a long way in North East India, particularly in the state of Assam. Despite the fact, the North East is seen as a region where more women are involved in income generating activity than women of the other parts of the country. Women also plays an important role in the development of our country. Therefore, entrepreneurship development among women is a global issue. It is important for development of a family and social progress. The present study was conducted in the different districts of Assam. The total number of sample was 120. Both registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs were selected for this study. Data were collected through interview method with the scale developed by the researcher. Personal motivational factors such as own interest and encouragement from family influenced respondents to select entrepreneurship as a profession hence get ranked I in the attractive sector of weaving.

Key words: Motivational factor; Empowerment; Women entrepreneurs;

Entrepreneurial development has been considered as one of the key drivers for socio economic growth and it also provides millions of job opportunities, offers a variety of consumer goods and services, enhances national prosperity and competitiveness (Zahra, 1999). According to Pages women entrepreneurs are becoming more important players in the entrepreneurial landscape. Although the number is still small as compared to businesses owned by men, this is encouraging as it shows that women no longer adhere to the stereotype that only men can be wage earners in the family. Although there are numerous obligations including take care of family by women, but still it is admirable that women can find success through their own businesses. Though there have been limitations, obstacles and roadblocks faced by these women in the past, society have begun to accept that women entrepreneurs do contribute greatly to a country's economy. As such, it is no longer unexpected to see women heading their own companies and being successful at the same time.

In spite of the outstanding performance, women entrepreneurs are not yet free from the problems while

achieving their goals in the dynamic business environment. The basic problem of a women entrepreneur is that she is a women and she pertains to her responsibilities towards family, society and work. The increasing presence of women in the business field as entrepreneurs or business owners in the last decades has changed the demographic characteristics of entrepreneurs. Further, women are increasingly taking up entrepreneurial career for improving their economic as well as social status and also fulfilling their creative urge. Hence an effort has been made to carry out a research on "*Motivational factors and empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Assam: an exploratory study*" with following objectives-

- i. To find out motivational factors of women entrepreneur
- ii. To assess the effect of micro enterprise on empowerment of women entrepreneurs

METHODOLOGY

Women entrepreneurs engaged in weaving and food processing units were selected for this investigation.

Lakhimpur, Jorhat and Kamrup districts of Assam were selected on the basis of concentration of women entrepreneurs for the present study. District Industries and Commerce Centre (DICC), Micro Medium and Small Enterprise (MSME) and Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) were selected to collect the registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs. The research design adopted for the present investigation was exploratory and descriptive. The statistical techniques used for analysis of data were - Mean scores and development of Women Empowerment Indices (WEI).

In this study, an attempt has been made to develop different indices on different aspects of empowerment namely economic, social, familial, psychological, legal and political aspect to measure the change in status of women entrepreneurs before and after becoming an entrepreneur.

The indices of economic, social, familial, psychological, legal and political aspects of women empowerment were calculated by using obtained score received by each respondent and the maximum obtainable score in each aspect. Women entrepreneurs engaged in weaving units were selected to find out the motivational factors. On the other hand, women entrepreneurs engaged in weavings as well as weaving & food processing and preservation units were selected to assess the effect of micro enterprise on empowerment of women entrepreneurs. Hence, two trades were selected for this investigation.

Motivational factors: In the present study motivational factor is operationally defined as influencing factors that inspire women to start micro enterprise to achieve their pre-determined goal.

Motivational factors for the present study were grouped under personal factor, economic factor and social factor. A scale was also developed to measure the motivational factors of women entrepreneurs.

Construction of Motivational Scale: A scale to measure "Motivational factors" of women entrepreneurs was constructed covering the personal, economic and social factors using the technique of summated rating scale construction as suggested by *Likert (1932)*. The details of the steps followed in the construction of this scale are presented here under-

a) *Collection of motivation statements :* The first step

in the scale construction was to collect and select a set of statements covering the entire universe of the content. The collection of these raw items was done after a careful scanning of relevant literature and in consultation with researchers and academicians. Then sixty statements were prepared that reflect various aspects of motivational factors.

b) *Editing the statements:* The prepared sixty statements were carefully edited by using the 14 criterion enunciated by *Edwards (1969)* and consequently a total of 10 statements were eliminated.

c) *Responses to raw items:* After editing the statements, a list of remaining fifty statements were mailed and also handed over personally to forty judges which included subject matter specialists including scientists, professors and experts in the field to examine the relevancy of each of these statements for inclusion in the final scale. The judges were requested to examine each statement and respond to each statement in terms of their own agreement or disagreement with the statements on three point continuum as most relevant, relevant and irrelevant.

d) *Statement Analysis and Scoring:* The scoring pattern adopted for the statements was 3, 2 and 1 for most relevant, relevant and irrelevant respectively. The total score was then calculated for each of the 30 judges by summing up the scores of individual items.

e) *Calculation of 't' values:* Based on the total scores, the statements were arranged in descending order. The top 25 per cent of the statements with their total score were considered as the high groups and the bottom 25 per cent as the low groups, so that these two groups provided criterion groups to evaluate the individual item. With the help of these two criterion groups, 't' values were computed (by using formula of *Edwards (1969)*) for all the 28 statements.

f) *Final selection of statements:* The statements with 't' value equal to or greater than 1.75 were selected initially with the logic that the average responses of the high and low group to all these selected statements differ significantly. On the basis of ratings assigned by the judges the scale value and "Q" value were calculated. For suitability of the motivational factors, the scale values with more than 1.0 and Q values of more than 1.2 were finally selected.

Reliability of the Scale: The reliability of the scale so

Table 1. Distributions of statements with t value, Scale value and Q value on suitability and relevance of Motivational Statements

Personal factor

Statements	t value	Scale value	Q value
S1	0.49	5.30	2.36
S2	1.10	5.75	2.43
S3	0.36	4.50	2.50
S4	1.80	3.72	0.71
S5	2.74	3.72	1.62
S6	0.80	3.90	1.89
S7	0.32	2.75	1.93
S8	1.80	2.50	2.33
S9	2.83	4.30	1.94
S10	3.21	4.25	2.44
S11	2.25	4.50	2.17
S12	0.67	7.50	0.19
S13	1.41	4.21	1.38
S14	1.64	4.17	1.54

Mean of scale value = 4.36, Mean of Q value = 1.81
 S1-S 14 indicate different statements of personal factor

Economic factor

Statements	t value	Scale value	Q value
S1	1.24	7.50	0.19
S2	2.61	5.00	2.53
S3	1.71	4.64	0.05
S4	3.67	3.90	1.00
S5	4.57	3.90	1.55
S6	4.03	3.75	1.75
S7	3.36	3.50	1.58
S8	5.06	3.50	3.50

Mean of scale value = 4.46, Mean of Q value = 1.51
 S1-S 8 indicate different statements of economic factor

Social factor

Statements	t value	Scale value	Q value
S1	1.39	5.50	1.37
S2	1.78	4.05	0.57
S3	2.56	4.00	1.33
S4	1.99	3.83	1.25
S5	1.54	3.83	2.00
S6	2.12	2.50	2.35

Mean of scale value = 3.95; Mean of Q value = 1.47
 S1-S 6 indicate different statements of social factor

constructed for the study was pretested by using the split half technique (as recommended by *Edward, 1957*). It was administered to 30 non sampled

respondents in Jorhat district of Assam. The scores on the odd numbered and even numbered statements were worked out separately and correlated. The coefficient of correlation between odd and the even scores was 0.851, which was found to be significant at 1 per cent level which testify a high internal consistency of the scale. Hence, the scale is said to be reliable.

Validity of the Scale : The validity of scale was established through content validity, which means the representativeness or sampling adequacy of the content of a measuring instrument. *Neyman (1967)* indicated two major standards for ensuring content validity (I) A representative collection of the items and (II) Sensible method of test construction. This satisfies both these criteria as the possible statements that could be made about economic motivation was gathered from literature and consultation with expert who have knowledge about this psychological object and the scale was constructed in accordance with the steps enunciated in the summated rating techniques. Moreover, calculation of ‘t’ values assured high discriminatory values of the statements. Therefore, the scale was taken as a valid measure of motivation.

Scoring techniques of the scale: The final motivational scale consisted of 28 statements were administered to women entrepreneurs who constituted the sample for this study. Each item in the scale was provided to five point continuum as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree and scored as 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively. The total score of each respondent on the scale was obtained by adding the scores of all the individual items in that scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal factor: Motivational factors for taking up entrepreneurship as a profession varied from respondent to respondent. The data presented in the Table 2 showed the ranking of different statements on the basis of mean scores. The findings showed that own interest and encouragement from family influenced respondents to select entrepreneurship as a profession hence get ranked I with equal mean score 5.30 followed by educational qualification, an ambition to become an entrepreneur, utilizing spare time, life long goal and determination ranked as II, III. IV, V and VI with mean scores of 4.88, 4.81, 4.60, 4.35 and 4.30 respectively. The Table also reflected that statements such as doing something

creative, to provide employment opportunity to others ranked as VII and VIII respectively. Statement got equally lower position in the motivational scale were self esteem, self confidence, to gain self sufficiency and past experience with mean scores of 3.41 and 3.22 respectively. The statements got lowest rank was technical qualification in the list of motivational factors with mean score 2.98 in the area of weaving. The findings can be supported with the findings of *Jha (2012)*, *Reddy (2012)*, *Ushakiran et al. (2012)* and *Memon (2012)*.

The findings further reflected that motivational factors under personal factor influenced respondents to select entrepreneurship as a fulltime profession for gainful income. The findings also showed that own interest seems to be the urge to do something influenced them to start an enterprise that is why most of the respondents entered in the areas of weaving, food processing and preservation. Moreover, it is very interesting to note that self motivation is an active support to pursue entrepreneurship in the two attractive profession. A sense towards independent decision-making on their life and career is the motivational factor behind this urge. Respondents engaged in these profession due to push and pull factors that encouraged them to have an independent occupation and stands on their own legs. It also happened because of their self-realization about the burning problem of unemployment situation of Assam which inspired them to start a business so that young women can be employed for their better economic survival. Thus their threatened existence forced them to enter into the business. The important pull and push factors makes them to taking up the ventures of weaving not only to make money but also to share their talents/skills and make the best of what they possess thereby benefiting the society at large, hence personal motivational factor get ranked I as compared to other motivational factors.

Economic factors : A perusal of Table 3 highlights that economic need got ranked I with mean score of 4.68 and economic independence ranked II position with mean score of 4.53 and to support family expenditure was ranked at number III in the list of motivational factors with mean score 4.51. The table further showed that availability of raw material was ranked IV with mean score 4.40, government subsidy was ranked V with mean score 3.68. It can also be observed from

Table 2. Ranking of Personal factors (N=120)

Statements	Weaving	
	Mean Score	Rank
Educational qualification	4.88	II
Own interest	5.30	I
Own ambition	4.81	III
Doing something creative	4.10	VII
Self confidence	3.41	IX
To gain self sufficiency	3.22	X
Determination	4.30	VI
Self esteem	3.41	IX
Encouragement from family	5.30	I
To provide employment opportunity	3.64	VIII
Past experience	3.22	X
Technical qualification	2.98	XI
Lifelong goal	4.35	V
Utilizing spare time	4.60	IV

Table 3. Ranking of Economic factors (N=120)

Statements	Weaving	
	Mean Score	Rank
Economic need	4.68	I
Economic independence	4.53	II
To support family expenditure.	4.51	III
Availability of raw material.	4.40	IV
Good market potential.	3.20	VII
To get high profit	3.15	VIII
Utilize government policy.	3.36	VI
Government subsidy	3.68	V

Table 4. Ranking of Social factors (N=120)

Statements	Weaving	
	Mean score	Rank
To get recognition in the society	4.92	I
Involve in social activities	4.69	IV
Attain high social status	4.75	II
Role model to others	4.70	III
Access to technical support	3.30	VI
To meet many people	3.95	V

Table 2 shows that to utilize government policy, good market potential and to get high profit got the lowest rank of VI, VII and VIII with mean score 3.36, 3.20 and 3.15 respectively in the area of weaving. Similar findings are reported by *Jha (2012)* and *Krishnamoorthy and Balasubramani (2014)*.

Social factors : It can be observed from the Table 4 that to get recognition in the society got rank I followed by attain high social status with rank II. This was

followed by role model to others with mean score 4.70. The statements got lowest rank in the list of motivational factors were involve in social activities, to meet many people and access to technical support with mean scores of 4.69, 3.95 and 3.30 in the area of weaving. The findings can be supported with the findings of *Reddy (2012)* and *Jha (2012)*.

Most women entrepreneurs in the study area were highly motivated to provide employment opportunities to unemployed women to balance their life. To become a leader was found as a notable motivating factor for women entrepreneurs also. Most of the respondents' belief that starting a business may lead to a more quality lifestyle. It also happened because of their self-realization about the burning problem of unemployment in Assam which inspired them to start a business so that young women can be employed for their better economic survival. Thus, their threatened existence forced them to enter into the business. The important pull and push factors makes women decide to taking up ventures to make money and also wants to share their talents or skills and make the best of what they possess thereby benefiting the society at large.

Some of the respondents in the study area were ignorant of new technology had no knowledge about measurement and basic accounting. Hence the motivational factor access to technical support got the lowest rank in the list of motivational factors.

Table 5. Effect of micro enterprise on empowerment of women entrepreneurs in different aspects

Group	Different aspects			
	Weaving		FPP	
	Index value	t-value	Index value	t-value
Before	17.82	13.53**	15.44	12.07**
after	27.60		19.60	

FPP= Food processing and preservation

The data presented in the Table 5 reflected that all the aspects of empowerment differ significantly in the two areas of weaving and food processing and preservation.

The data presented in the same Table revealed that there is improvement in all aspects of the entrepreneurs in the area of weaving which was reflected through the mean difference in the obtained score before taking up enterprise and after becoming an entrepreneur. To identify the significant change

between different aspects women empowerment indices was developed in the two aspects.

The probable reason of change between two stages in the areas might be due to interaction with successful entrepreneurs, active participation in expo/mela which inspired them to change their perspective regarding different of aspects of empowerment. The findings also reflected that entrepreneurs were able to take part in household decision, make contribution in household property as well as contribution in food were increased after becoming an entrepreneurs. These findings can be supported with findings of *Yesmeen and Gangaiah (2014)*.

It was expressed by the respondents that due to communication with other successful entrepreneur, market exposure all the respondents made improvements significantly in the aspects of social and political aspect which enabled them to contribute in family expenditure, save in own account, participation in different meeting as a special invitee and so on. These findings can be supported with findings of *Yesmeen and Gangaiah (2014)*.

It is concluded that women have attained empowerment in economic, social, familial, legal, political and psychological spheres after starting the micro-enterprises, which is a true reflection of women empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Micro enterprises aim at developing and utilizing the entrepreneurial talent and potential of rural women to meet the local needs. Survivor and growth of these enterprises are essential for the entrepreneurs as they ensure better standards of living and thereby their individuals, family and their social empowerment. The findings of the study also revealed that after becoming an entrepreneur women became economically, socially, politically, legally or psychologically empowered in both the areas of enterprises namely weaving and food processing and preservation. which results in control of their income, allows to contribute in household decision, purchase of household property, opening and operating own account, contribution towards education, health and clothing and also in social functions. This study beyond any shadow of doubt has revealed that the enterprises have succeeded in the different aspects of empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

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