Why Women Start Entrepreneurship in Punjab, Pakistan: A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract:
Women's participation in entrepreneurship is considered as a radiant solution for many economic problems in Pakistan. This research undertaking aimed to explore the causes of women's entry into the entrepreneurial world. It focused to describe the situation of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan with special reference to Punjab province. The objectives of the study also include explaining the motivational factors and decisive factors that lead women to start new ventures. A qualitative approach was used to dig out the realities. For this purpose, Focus group discussions were conducted in three randomly selected districts of Punjab province. The results showed that factors that make women start entrepreneurship do not operate solely as for many women multiple factors were involved in their final decision to start a venture. Economic necessity, family background, personal interest, and a random opportunity were the most immediate causes to start a business. However, some motivational factors like self-esteem and self-satisfaction were also among the decisive factors. Supporting factors were also considered as important as the main leading factors were as without supporting factors women entrepreneurs felt in compliance to start the business.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, New Venture, Focus Group Discussion, Motivations, Causes, Economic Necessity

I. Introduction
Entrepreneurship is an enviable option being used to abolish or at least reduce the odd effects of unemployment, social discrimination, and economic augmentation. All over the world, countries are planning and making policies for the promotion of entrepreneurship (Saeed, et al., 2014). Although there are huge obstructions in the form of human resources, fiscal and regulatory policies, infrastructure, judicial and financial constraints, still enterprises are increasing in developing countries like Pakistan day by day (Economic survey of Pakistan 2011-2012). World Bank surveyed eighty-four industrial and developing countries and measured the entrepreneurial activities during the
year 2003-05. It reported that in Pakistan, on average only 7 percent of new companies register annually and this ranked lower than many other regional countries (Mahmood et al., 2012).

Women's empowerment and their participation in economic development remained a major goal of policies in almost all developing countries of the world. The women are increasingly adopting entrepreneurship as a profession globally. This pace is slower in Pakistan with respect to other countries. For instance, one percent of the women population in Pakistan is involved in entrepreneurial activities and in Zambia, 40 percent are involved in entrepreneurship (Kelley et al. 2012). Women indulge in Entrepreneurial activities due to several factors. However, these factors mainly depend on the circumstances of women. These factors could be inspirational, need-based or inheritance factors. So far this is still an area to discover regarding female entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Pakistan’s Socio-economic growth has been negatively affected due to the geo-political unrest of the area and this vulnerable situation has also impacts on women entrepreneurship. The major restraints identified through literature are gender discrimination, no support from the community, low levels of access to information, insufficient education and training opportunities, lack of social capital and trust on women's potentials and access to capital (Afza et al., 2010).

Conversely, Pulaniappan et al. (2012) made an addition to these factors and reported that women entrepreneurs face difficulties of deficiency of appropriate leadership, planning, and allocation of resources while executing their business. In a culturally embedded country like Pakistan where women are restricted to the four walls of the house, it is difficult for a woman to come to the forefront and strive for economic creation. Family hardships and some motivational factors are operative behind the women's participation in entrepreneurial activities (Das, 2000). Women entrepreneurs work to earn some money to meet their expenses and to support their families. The motive of self-satisfaction is also a reason for many women to start an enterprise (Saeed, et. al., 2014). Certain entrepreneurial opportunities are offered in every economy but everyone in that economy cannot be succeeded to be benefitted from such opportunities. Only a few people dare to take the risk and start a business (Orhan and Scott, 2001). The main focus of the study was women entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas of (Punjab) Pakistan. It specifically focused on the following objectives:

- Describing the situation of women entrepreneurs in (Punjab) Pakistan
- Explaining the motivations operative behind the entrepreneurial intentions of women
- Describe the decisive factors for the start-up of women entrepreneurship

II. Methods

For the present study, Focus Group Discussions were conducted to get in-depth and detailed information related to issues from relevant group. The results of focus group discussions are useful to get information about how people think, feel and behave with respect to specific conditions or issues (Freitas, 1998). In a focus group discussion, a topic is discussed with a small group of people who belong to a specific field and the topic under discussion. This Group should be of 4-12 members that take part in an group interview for at least 90 to 120 minutes (Patton, 1990).
The universe for the present study was Punjab Province (Pakistan). Punjab is the most populous province among the four provinces of Pakistan. For administrative purposes it is divided into 36 Districts. All the women entrepreneurs in Punjab, whose business age was two or more than two years, were the population of present study. At first stage Punjab Province was divided into three clusters namely Upper, Central and Lower Punjab. On second stage, from each cluster one District was selected randomly. The selected districts were Rawalpindi from upper Punjab, Faisalabad from central Punjab and Lodhran from lower Punjab.

For present study, initially four focus group discussions were decided. But due to the refusal of many entrepreneurs to participate in the discussion or disagreement upon the venue and time for discussions, only 3 focus group discussions could be possible. In focus group discussions, it’s very critical to decide a location for the discussion and the participants who are going to participate in the discussion. First of all a number of women entrepreneurs in selected areas were contacted and their willingness to participate in discussion was received with the help of key informants. Consensus on the location suitable for focus group discussion was made meanwhile. Lodhran is a small District and majority of it’s population is rural. So, 1 focus group was planned to conduct in rural Lodhran. 5 participants from rural union council of Tehsil Lodhran were agreed to be gather at a home of a local leader. This location was agreed upon by all participants as in their opinion it was a known and safe place for them. Similarly 2 focus group discussions were conducted in urban areas of Faisalabad and Rawalpindi according to the availability of women entrepreneurs and their consensus upon the location of meeting (details shown in table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Discussions</th>
<th>FGD No. 1</th>
<th>FGD No. 2</th>
<th>FGD No. 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lodhran Rural Area</td>
<td>Participants = 5</td>
<td>Faisalabad Urban Area</td>
<td>Rawalpindi Urban Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faisalabad Urban Area</td>
<td>Participants – 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rawalpindi Urban Area</td>
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Table 1: Participants of Focus Group Discussion

First of all Participants were received with a happy gesture by assistant moderator/ facilitator. Participants were, then introduced with one another so that they became familiar with each other. An informal discussion was floated by moderator to make participants excited and comfortable and friendly with environment. A list of themes was prepared before discussion for the instant guide and as reminder for moderator so that discussion could be kept in right direction and premises. Focus group discussion was mainly recorded by the moderator in two ways (i) taking notes and (ii) voice recording. Moderator tried to make short notes quickly without interrupting the ongoing discussion. Respondents’ anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. Informed consent was obtained from participants. For Focus Group Discussions, “The Analysis Continuum” Posed by Kreuger and Casy (2014) was used. Key issues narrated by participants are presented in the form of descriptive statements. Each issue of discussion was concluded by an interpretation of the comments made.

III. Results and Discussion

Starting a new business is a contextual phenomenon which needs consideration of multifaceted factors (Hundt and Sternberg, 2016). Same was argued by majority of
participants of focus group discussions that although the major reason to start a business was one or in some cases two, still many factors played role in starting the business. Four important themes i.e economic necessity, Interest family background and opportunities were identified as the main reason to start the business by the participant entrepreneurs. However it was also find that some supporting factors are also important in decision making process to start entrepreneurship. These factors are narrated below.

A. Economic necessity

In developing countries most driving force towards entrepreneurship is economic necessity (Wong, 2012). In present study, out of 17 participants of 3 focus group discussion, 7 reported that their motivational reason behind their startup of business was economic necessity. Being in a nuclear family system and having kids with younger ages, compelled women to start their business when they didn’t have the opportunity to get an employed job. One of participants narrated as,

“My husband remained sick all the time. There was no one in family to support us. There was nothing to do so I decided to do something at my own.”

Women started business either to fulfill the basic need of the family or to support their families to get extra money (Mattis, 2004). Another participant said,

“Unfortunately my husband was fired from job and he was jobless. Although I am a graduate but I am living in rural area. It was hard to get a job in my area. To make a living, in such circumstances was hard. So I started to give beautician services to my neighboring ladies. This was what I could do with a minimal investment.”

Participants agreed that economic needs rise with rising inflation rates which results in initiation of new venture, especially when the breadwinner of the family is a weak earner, no men left in family to earn a living or family is suffering from economic crises. They were also of view that desire to raise living standards and to reach a higher socio-economic status for the sake of children future was also a reason to start a business. The findings from the discussions can be summed up as participant entrepreneurs were agreed that economic necessity may arise due to the unavailability of bread winner, to fulfill basic needs of family, desire to get extra money, due to increasing inflation rates, to raise socio-economic status and to secure the future of children.

B. Personal Interest

Women around the globe are converting to entrepreneurship because of their motivation to show their independence to others. Women eager to a specific field may turn to be entrepreneur in order to accomplish their dreams. One of women participant said,

“I love the beauty. I not only maintain myself but also wanted every woman to look beautiful. I was fond of beautician as a profession.”

Some of participants argued that until and unless entrepreneur did not have interest in the sector she is going to adopt for her business, she cannot excel in the business. They were of view that entrepreneurship might be a name to make a living but
it largely endorse the involvement of an entrepreneur up to the level of passion to excel in the field. One of participant shared her experience and said,

“I was much fascinated by fashion designing. But when it came the time to decide about the sector for my entrepreneurship, my husband compelled me to start business in education sector as it was most demanded sector at my place. I started an academy and offered various short courses but the idea got flopped as my interest was not there. After 6 months of hardship I changed the line of my business and now I am regarded as one of the best sellers in boutiques of my area.”

All of the participants were agreed that success of entrepreneurship is based on interest whether it was the motivational factor (base line) for the business or it was developed after the final conceptualization of idea of business.

C. Family background

The entrepreneurial intentions of women in business families are always higher. Women from business family feel it convenient to start a business rather than entering into a paid employment. Social learning can take place while observing the behavior of role models (Bandura, 1977). In previous researches it was proposed that women with a male family in business specially father are more likely intended to start their own business (Brockhaus and Horwitz, 1986). In this study women with a family member in business showed their intentions that they always wanted to be in business. They thought it most convenient ways to express their value. One of participants said,

“My husband and my father, both were business man. As I belonged to a business family so I always were eager to start a business myself. I used to do brainstorming upon ideas for entrepreneurship. But many of them failed to produce an acceptable feasibility. The day when I came up with idea to exhibit and sell folk dresses, was my first day into this business.”

The business families, as argued in focus group discussion were more supportive towards women entrepreneurship however this trend was not found in the case studies of successful entrepreneurs (explained in next section of this chapter). It might be due to the fact that those women started their business a considerable time ago. At that time social scenarios and scenario related to women entrepreneurship were different. In group discussion, one of the participants expressed her views that women entrepreneurs, who were from business families, enjoy an always-ready support in all affairs of business. Mostly women from business families entered into entrepreneurship without hesitation as they had moral financial and technical support from their male family members with business as profession. It was also discussed in length that women having a women entrepreneurs in their family had stronger intentions to be entrepreneurs. Those women entrepreneurs were role models for them.

D. Opportunity

The economies whish are considered as factor-driven economies have characteristics of high opportunity and high capabilities sensitivity (Greene et al., 2013). The intentions of entrepreneurship would be high when half of entrepreneurs perceive good opportunities in starting a business and two third believe in their capabilities (Kelley et al., 2016).
Where the other factors play active role in entrepreneurial intentions of women, opportunity to start a business was proved to be true for a small fraction of women entrepreneurs in this study. Such women who find an opportunity to start business are called to be “by chance” entrepreneurs. For many women entrepreneurs, opportunity played a secondary role. In such cases, despite other factors, opportunity to start a business triggered their entrepreneurial intentions. One of participants expressed,

“Although I wanted to do something for my family in general and for myself in particular, but I never took any initiative until one day when I got the news that one of nearby school was for sale. I immediately made a cost benefit analysis and discussed it with my family. Everyone one approved my idea and now I am an entrepreneur.”

Entrepreneurial Father or husbands were found not only as inspirational factors but also a socialization factor of entrepreneurship. The data shows that a considerable number of women entrepreneurs (father of 6 out of 17 entrepreneurs and husband of 6 out of 11 married entrepreneurs) had father or their husbands in business profession. These findings were also supported by quantitative data in table no. 5.2. These family members not only appreciated the decision of women to start their business but also encouraged them to take risk of starting a business. A participant said,

“I was inspired by my father and he appreciated me to start the business. Although as beginner, I was scared of failure but my father encouraged me and helped me out in making feasibilities of business operations.”

Participants who had business man in their families discussed that they had better learning of business procedures from their family members.

“My father supported me not only financially but also morally. He was with me from the start of idea conception till now. He nurtured my skills as an entrepreneur. As business man he knew the ways through which my business could be benefited.”

One of the participants expressed her views as:

“It was such a blessing that my husband was also from business profession. I learnt management, finance management, dealings of legal issues, tactics of marketing and handling of workers all from my husband.”

It is concluded from the above discussion that family members from business profession are not only role models for women entrepreneurs but they also serve as socializing institute for women as entrepreneur. However these findings contradict with the findings on Lerner et al., (1997) who proposed that parents do not positively influence the growth of entrepreneurs.

E. Motivation and goals

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report (2010) described that the rate of necessity-driven entrepreneur is 41 percent which is second highest rate in region in comparison with countries like Turkey, Iran, Saudia Arabia and Egypt. Females with economic necessity tend to enhance their capabilities faster than those with other motives. One of participants explained,
“My family was in sheer need of money. I could not lose the profit I earn, in experiments. This was the reason I took every step after several considerations and ponderings. I also learned methods to manage finance in a way that I could save every paisa (penny).”

The discussions also confirmed that entrepreneurs who had studied their filed as a subject and had technical training were running their business successfully. Women having previous entrepreneurial experience or experience as an employee of enterprise with same business line were considered as trained entrepreneurs as well. One of the participants said,

“I think when you are not trained you learn by your mistakes. My training enabled me to groom myself as an entrepreneur. The skills I learnt once, now I am applying.”

From the discussion of participants it was found that the entrepreneur who started the business as an opportunity had initial difficulties to run the business. She said,

“Although I started the school by availing opportunity, but I had to face many difficulties. The person who sold the school to me had created a mess of business matters which were to be dealt with an entrepreneurial expertise. I was new in business so I faced problems in resolving issue, specially marketing and building in which school was established.”

The economic independence made some of entrepreneurs to get maximum benefit out of their business. One participant explained,

“I wanted to be independent in my decisions and I also want an economic independence. This motive influenced me to start the business and in pursuance of this motive I worked vigorously. Now I have proved my worth in my family and my family respects my decisions and I have complete control over my expenses.”

The achievement motive was found less in discussions with entrepreneurs. The discussion on effects of motivation and goals can be summarized as women entrepreneurs with economic necessity learn the entrepreneurial skill faster than other entrepreneurs. Previous experience and training are important factors which impact positively on women entrepreneurship. Independence motive contribute significantly in the performance of business. In the focus group discussions of this study, most of entrepreneurs had goals of profit maximization as their primary goal. However a few participants said that their primary goal is to attain their personal satisfaction and a peaceful life. In discussions, participants described that although they want to get increase revenue and sales, excellence in output or services, still their foremost objective is to maximize profit because this profit would lead towards their satisfaction with business, family, and life.

“It ultimately ensures your survival,” explained by a participant while arguing for the importance of profit maximization.
F. Supporting Factors

These intentions do not really work alone. Some of Participants were of view that starting a new business was a dream so charming (Fielden and Dawe, 2004). But realization of this dream was so tough. One of the participants said,

“It was easy to say that I should start a business to fulfill my needs and everything seemed to be very easy until the final decision was made. Once I decided to finally start the business, a long queue of problems was awaiting.”

Some of supporting factors were also identified in FGDs which help women to start the business finally.

Technical training

Women felt it an important factor to have technical training of any field. It’s a cultural myth that girls should learn some technical things like stitching, embroidery or self grooming so that they can help their families in hardships. So was view of participants in the focus groups. They thought that a woman should be prepared for hardships of life. Life does not remain same all the times. They argued that technical training help the women to take immediate step for the startup of new business. For some participants, technical training restricted their type of business and they did not have to think about other ideas of business however some women entrepreneurs had to get training after deciding to start a business and before starting business.

Field of study specialization

Women entrepreneurs were mostly highly educated. Women in business of health and medicines and in fashion designing deliberately chose their subjects as they planned to get into the field of their specialization. Their specialization makes a convenience in their business to adopt and relate the ideas. However the number of such entrepreneurs was very limited.

Need of area

Women entrepreneurs expressed that business would excel if it is also the need of the area. One of the women entrepreneurs said that she decided to start a business but the problem was which business type would be more suitable. She said,

“I assessed the needs of the area and came up with conclusion that there was only one beauty parlor in my village. So I decided to start a beauty parlor for which I had to get training first.”

Free time

Women entrepreneurs have to fulfill double duties of home and business. Many of women who wanted to do their business but cannot enter into filed because of the time limitations. One of participants said.

“I could not start my business until I could be able to get some spare time and it could be possible when my kids reach to ages where they need me relatively lesser.”

The participants of discussion agreed that women entrepreneurs have to make the free time feasible even before thinking of business type activities. Participants agreed
that women cannot sacrifice their home time for business that is why they have to make arrangements to get free time for business.

*Number and ages of children*

The number of children and their ages also play a secondary role in the decision of starting an entrepreneurship. Participant entrepreneurs considered that with a large number of children, it’s difficult to run a business. Especially when children are of younger age, they need more time of mother. They said that mostly women waited the time when their kids reach a school going age so that they could spare some time for business while their children were at school. One of participants expressed,

“My husband did not allow me neither to run a business nor to do any paid job when my kids were of small ages. But when they started to go to school, then I planned to start the business.”

*Support in domestic responsibilities*

Women entrepreneurs were asked as probing question related to start up of business that what they decided about household responsibilities while deciding a business to run. Many of them said that when they decided to start a business household chores were a major issue and they decided to manage the domestic tasks first and then spare time for business. Those participants living in joint family said that they had support of other family members for domestic duties.

*Access to finance*

The most crucial factor to start a business is finance. Although it is placed among the factors that affect business at every stage (Achtenhagen, and Welter, 2011), still its importance at start up of business is unavoidable. One of the participants responded’

“I delayed start up of my business for approximately seven months just because of unavailability of finance.”

Three participant entrepreneurs however described that their extent of motivation was so much high that they started their business with minimal finance and after some time they made a larger business out of a small investment. One of them said,

“When I started my shop, I had nothing. I placed few boxes of stitching thread role in outer room of my house for sale. After few days, one sales representative of a cosmetic company gave me some products to sale and said to pay the bill after selling products. In this way I projected my sales and now my shop is full of women accessories.”

Another entrepreneur said,

“I started my business with an initial investment of Rs. 3000 only. I used to design socks, go markets, select yarn, place orders in hosiery mills and then market them all by myself. After so many struggles now I am at a safe business stage.”
These were cases of women entrepreneurs with extra ordinary entrepreneurial motivations and skills. However for other participants finance was a major constraint while deciding to start a business.

Permission from family

In Pakistani society, women always need permissions before any step they are going to take. Women seek permission from their family heads who is mostly a male member of family (Pfeifer, 2003). In discussion a few number of women entrepreneurs reported that to get permission to start a business was not an easy task. One of the participants said,

“My father was against my business plans. He refused me to give permission to start business. However on satisfactory defense of my business from my side and on elaborating its procedures to be free from involvement of mainstream business of men, he showed his consent.”

The reason of not getting permission from family was described by a participant as below:

“Family fears that people will talk negatively about the women especially if she is unmarried. Parents fear that their unmarried daughter would not find a good spouse if she is involved in business as business women is not seen positively.”

IV. Conclusion

The idea of women entrepreneurship is relatively new in Pakistan having a history of 3 to 4 decades. It is also a fact that women are rapidly engaging in entrepreneurial activities due to various reasons. This research aimed to find the causal factors behind starting the entrepreneurship and their status through focus group discussion in one of the most populous province of Pakistan. These discussions helped to draw some reasons which drive women to start new business. Despite the fact that women in Pakistani society are supposed to be at home and take care of house hold activities and responsibilities, multiple factors such as economic necessity, large family responsibility compel them to start economic generation activities. Beside these factors, family background, personal interest to do some entrepreneurial activities and self satisfaction were also motivational factors (Tambunan, 2009). Although these above mentioned factors were the main reasons to start a business for participants of the focus group discussions, however some supporting factors were also required by women to start a business. All the married women had to see their children ages and they need support in household responsibilities. Women with children of small ages cannot give full time to business. Women are also bind to the permission from families. Access to finance, technical training, and specialization according to the need of area are also supporting factors form Pakistani women to decide about a business whether to start or not.
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