A Qualitative Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Education Sector in Punjab

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Abstract

In the 21st century, educational entrepreneurs are expected to make school administration go smoothly including developing teaching and learning. School leaders must have a feature and skills that are outstanding and different from the previous school administrators to compete with the educational market and to get success in their field. The purpose of this research was to explore the hidden factors which influence women entrepreneurs to start their business and to identify the salient features as school principals, as well as the impact of those features on their performance. The study is qualitative in nature; therefore, an interview protocol was developed to get the insight of the women entrepreneurs. Interpretive Phenomenological analysis technique was used to derive the meaning out of data and it was found that women are facing various challenges including finances, lack of training, unfavorable social condition, non-provision of government support and family-related issues. The findings of the present study suggest that women entrepreneurs in the field of education can play an effective role in many aspects if they are provided with help and support.

Disciplinary: Social Sciences, Education, Entrepreneurship

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1 Introduction

The recent development and changes in the sphere show that women are currently making prominent input towards the wealth of the nation. Forbes reports that women are becoming more entrepreneurial, holding more than 36% of all businesses in 2012 (Stengel, 2016). This was an

incredible hop from the year 2007. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) accounted that there are 126 million women initiating or running businesses. Amongst them, 98 million functioning established (over three and a half years) businesses. That's how women entrepreneurs are influencing the worldwide economy (VanderBrug, 2013). According to many research women, entrepreneurs grant potential economic development benefits for the larger economy and community (Mas-Tur et al., 2015; Millán et al., 2019; Riebe, 2012). The world has turned into a global village. Advance means of transportation and communication have decreased the distance among people and places. This has led to a multicultural world that has posed challenges for its inhabitants. In order to survive and to be the productive citizen of the new globalized world, one needs to be equipped with 21st-century skills. Tony Wagner enlisted the 21st-century skills in his book "The Global Achievement Gap" which are "i) critical thinking and problem solving, ii) collaboration and leadership, iii) agility and adaptability, iv) initiative and entrepreneurialism, v) effective oral and written communication, vi) accessing and analyzing information, vii) curiosity and imagination" (Saavedra &Opfer, 2012).

School administrators in the twenty-first century are expected to obey the organization's directions in order to keep school administration running smoothly. Because learning cannot occur without leadership, principals must seek to ensure that he or she has behaved as a leader for student learning. School leaders are those who understand academic material, evaluation, and teaching strategies, collaborate with teachers to improve their skills and collect, analyze, and use data to make choices. School principals are supposed to collaborate with teachers, students, parents, community members, and other agencies to meet each student's educational requirements. Some abilities are critical for leaders in today's world, such as team building and conflict resolution abilities to ensure that universal learning environments exist in every classroom if the school's leader cannot accomplish this many work objectives on his or her alone (Phonsa et al., 2019; Vail, 2010). The qualifications that school principals must possess in order to be successful in their management roles included modern talents. In short, executives must be skilled at their tasks in order to instruct/recommend subordinate teachers in their regular duties and assign them to the appropriate positions. Furthermore, administrators would be able to strengthen deficiencies, promote strengths, inspire teachers, and collaborate with other relevant parties (Grigsby-Williams, 2018; Peterson & Van Fleet, 2004).

Being a woman, I was curious about how female school leaders run their businesses and how they become entrepreneurs. What are the roadblocks and motivators for them? As a researcher, I was interested in learning more about female entrepreneurs' success and how they are portrayed. The preponderance of male entrepreneurs in the literature has fueled a desire to learn more about women, and the modest number of journal papers on women entrepreneurs, in general, has fueled this desire.

Female's business dreams and conditions are inclined by communal and cultural variables. There are numerous concealed factors that can hinder or promote a woman entrepreneur's success.

This topic has completed its consideration and a great deal of research is being done on it in advanced countries, but there is a dearth of study in underdeveloped and developing countries, such as Pakistan (Nawaz, 2018), which is why this issue was considered for investigation in Pakistan.

Female entrepreneurs have been hailed as new development engines and economic lights in emerging countries, promising prosperity and well-being. Women have been identified as an important 'untapped source' of economic progress by a variety of stakeholders (Minniti & Naudé, 2010). The goal of this research is to give findings on the nature of women school proprietors' leadership in Pakistan, as well as to analyze their experiences with entrepreneurship in the field of education. The purpose of this research is to find out how and why women get to become entrepreneurs, as well as what factors hampered or aided their success.

The research questions are

1. How do female start their business in education?
2. What are the features of these educational female entrepreneurs?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneurship

There is no universal definition of entrepreneurship because it is influenced by factors such as economic functionality, institutional ownership, firm size and life cycle, resource base, and level of entrepreneurship. Some definitions of entrepreneurship include topics such as innovation, financial value, new products and marketplaces (Blundel & Lockett, 2011), or identifying, seizing, and exploiting opportunities (Bolton & Thompson, 2002).

According to Bolton and Thompson (2002), entrepreneurs seek out, seize, and exploit opportunities. If you add 'to develop a business suited to their needs,' you'll get a good idea of how entrepreneur innovation fits in with any lifestyle goals.

2.2 Women Entrepreneurship

This kind of definition for women entrepreneurs is distant from my thoughts of being a woman, it does not address women's demand for family flexibility, which is vital to me and I believe to other female businesses. The government promotes women to see entrepreneurship being fast-paced and high-growth by sponsoring and supporting organizations that help high-growth enterprises, such as The Business Growth Hub, and by depending on turnover and personnel figures to verify business worth. This strategy appears to be gendered, as it eliminates many women that do not want to conduct business in this manner.

Consequently, for the women entrepreneur I found this definition more general and satisfying: "An individual, who seeks, seizes and exploits opportunities, to develop businesses suitable for their needs". This definition is non-gender relevant, and it encompasses various levels of entrepreneurs, even those who work in a more strategic capacity, such as those who want to

operate a company or businesses that will work for them instead of continuing to work in the business at all times, as other definitions suggest (Bourne, 2016).

2.3 Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Martin, 2018). According to Keller and Mbewe (1991), empowerment is defined as: "A process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination." Women's empowerment in emerging economies would boost not only household welfare but also the social and budgetary health of countries through improved education, poverty reduction, and reduced violence (De Vita et al., 2014; Dolan & Scott, 2009; Scott et al., 2012). Scholars have identified information communication technology as one tool that can assist women's empowerment in the developing world (Ajjan et al., 2014).

Virginia Woolf (1929) claimed in her classic article A Space of One's Own that women need an additional source of income and a room of their own for their imagination to fully blossom. Over the last 30 years, an incredible infrastructure of gender-specific governmental and commercial organizations has emerged continue providing women entrepreneurs with the information, support, and financial backing they require to build the fastest-growing part of the economy (Mas-Tur et al., 2015; Riebe, 2012).

2.4 Barriers of Women Entrepreneurship

Studying women entrepreneurship is currently an under-researched field (Carter & Weeks, 2002), and recent inquiring routes are needed (Ahl, 2006).

According to Grigsby-Williams (2018), successful women have many barriers to success in common; this could include discrimination or lack of resources that could be preventing the success of women. Not all women who are entrepreneurs are successful, and this leaves quite a bit of confusion regarding what makes or breaks success in the entrepreneurial realm (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). There are different beliefs regarding how women's businesses could be successful. With the increase in women entrepreneurs, it is important to understand what is influencing their success (Jones, 2014).

Raab (2008) describes barriers for women entrepreneurship as "those factors, which circumvent or inhibit their entry into jobs, occupations, and organizations. Barriers are seen in the face of inequity". Raab proposed counting self-esteem, an inner barrier, and self-improvement, restricted external relationships, motherhood or families, mentorship, and loneliness are all factors to consider. Historically, these impediments have been neglected, but in order to shift perceptions about female entrepreneurship, these barriers should be identified and addressed. (Raab, 2008). Lack of motivation or stress could be considered barriers for women.

In the past, women have been put in positions that make it challenging to become entrepreneurs. With this reality, women have often shown less interest in roles of this capacity. Presently, with women breaking through the barriers, more insight is needed to better understand this shifting dynamic. According to (Raghuvanshi et al., 2017), barriers to women's success in entrepreneurship are all researched equally. They also state that understanding these barriers could yield better insight into the influence that they have on women.

Arora (2014) highlighted that women entrepreneurs are much higher on dependence, workgroup relation, intrinsic motivation, along with material incentives than that of their male counterparts. These are said to be the traits and factors that motivate women. Arora also found that women are focused more on relationships instead of things. These traits played a large role in the overall success of women leaders. Arora offered that when women assign meaning to their work, their motivation increases their stress. According to Arora, it is common for women to place meaning as a priority within their roles in relation to success; however, the study had a small sample size, so the findings may not be generalizable. Choosing a career path is a personal decision and can also be directly related to an individual's creativity and personal skills.

More exciting challenges are found in post-2000 literature. Several academics have pointed out that the twenty-first century represents a watershed moment for female entrepreneurs. In this traditionally male-dominated field, women entrepreneurs have made significant progress. Women entrepreneurs have more severe problems in the twenty-first century, according to various researchers. The advancement of technology, which drives strenuous service or product innovations, as well as weak communication and advocacy, financial restrictions, insufficient means and possibilities for advancing skills and talents, and a lack of role models (Halkias et al., 2011; Hatthakijphong & Ting, 2019; M., 2016; Zainuddin et al., 2017) are some of the major issues that stymie women entrepreneurs.

3 Method

The topic of the present research study falls under qualitative research as it suggests an exploration of the prospects, issues and challenges women entrepreneurs use to face while working in the field of education. So, for this particular study, we opted exploratory researcher design which comes under the qualitative methods of research. "Qualitative research is a method of inquiry used mainly in the Social Sciences and humanities with the aim of gathering data for an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that propel such behaviors" (Nwolise, 2011). This design is used to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, particularly when the topic is new and there are fewer available studies done in this regard.

3.1 Population

The population of the present study takes in women entrepreneurs working in the education sector and running their institutes in district Sargodha. Keeping in view the importance of contextual factors the results of the present study could only be generalized to female entrepreneurs, who are working in the education sector in small cities like Sargodha.

3.2 Sampling Size and Sampling Technique

Snowball sampling technique is employed for the current study keeping in view the very nature of decided sample. Snow ball is also called chain referral technique; it is a type of non-probability sampling, which is commonly used in qualitative research studies. This sampling technique is considered helpful, particularly for identifying the subjects which are otherwise hard to access, for example when there is no database or proper channel available to access the research subjects as per the need of a specific research study. Apart from this snowball sampling technique also saves time and financial resources (Sadler et al., 2010).

Due to the limited time for this research, we conducted fifteen interviews of those female entrepreneurs who were working in the educational field and managing their own small schools for more than five years.

3.3 Research Instrument

The semi-structured interview protocol was developed, consisting of eight factors, which were identified after a review of related literature. This process aids the researcher to travel around the views and feelings of the respondents in the related issue. For this research, firstly female entrepreneurs running educational institutes in Sargodha city were listed and then the researcher got their consent by explaining the purpose of the study and took their contact numbers, later by telephonic calls appointments were taken as per the convenience of both sides. Secondly, semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted with fifteen of the women entrepreneurs.

3.4 Data Analysis

The interpretive phenomenological analysis technique was used for the analysis of data (IPA). This analysis technique is used to reconnoiter the way participants view a particular entity, occurrence, or issue. This is not about making an objective statement about under the study concern rather focuses on the way an individual looks at it, thus the interpretive phenomenological analysis technique provides a basis to get the "insider's perspective" (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 Motivational Factor

One common factor that is identified by many of the researchers in this field is "the motives" behind starting a business venture. The motives behind starting the business influence the working and nature of business and decide the objectives of the business. Studies conducted by Tambunan (2017) and Vossenberg (2013), argue that most women in low-income countries are compelled by need or what we call pure survival, they do not come into the field for their needs of achievement but their personal situations lead them to start a business," out of necessity rather than an opportunity- because there are no jobs or any other options for income generation" (Vossenberg, 2013, p. 3).

For this purpose, the researcher identifies the objectives and motives for starting entrepreneurship. The important key terms derived from collected data are work experience in the

same field (either negatives or positive), academic family background, passion or ambition, earning, authoritative personality trait, social settings, chance and social service. The majority of the responses nearly 65% fell under two main key terms work experience in the same field and academic family background. As denoted by a respondent:

"My family environment made me start this school, my mother was a school teacher, and when I got married my father in law was a retired school principal, they have been a source of inspiration for me and that's why I came into the field of education".

Another lady said:

"I have been teaching for many years, and have been working as a principal in a well-known school as well; through my experience and working I got the motivation to start my own school".

Opportunity recognition has become hot talk when it comes to entrepreneurship, this is also realized in this particular research study, as 26 % of respondents said that they felt the need of starting entrepreneurship in their surrounding areas and this has been one of the important factors that motivated them to go ahead.

4.2 Starting Entrepreneurship

There are many hurdles that female entrepreneurs face at the very start of their business. The researcher felt that, while talking about this phase most of the women entrepreneurs got sentimental there were lots of expressions while speaking of the stories of ups and downs they had to bear when taking their first step. Competition and rivalries in the surroundings were said to be the biggest challenge by 47% of the female school heads. Apart from this, 14% of women found it difficult to set up the initial arrangements, 20 % said that getting admission was a big challenge to them as there were already many schools working in the surroundings; thus convincing people to send their kids to another newly established school was proved to be a tough task. Explaining this, a woman said:

"It was difficult for me to convince people; even people were hesitant of paying a quite reasonable amount".

Another issue in this regard was social restrictions 20% of females pointed to this problem. Lack of capital was pointed out as a problem by 26% of the women; again the same amount of responses was recorded for work together. Female entrepreneurs said that having family responsibilities along with a business venture becomes a challenge itself. For instance, the following statement of a school head describes her pain:

"Living in a joint family system makes it difficult to run a school as you have to fulfill your family responsibilities and have to pay full attention to your work too".

4.3 Financial Factors

Another hurdle for women entrepreneurs is a lack of funding and a better understanding of how to use finances. Starting or running an enterprise requires a sufficient amount of capital, thus

respondents were asked if the financing was an issue in beginning their businesses. Different statements were uttered by the school heads. The first impression that appeared was like:

"ahh, it's a long and painful story".

"I sold my jewelry. And I am pretty much satisfied with my decision what if I had loads of jewelry".

Besides this, money was borrowed from siblings in many cases; a lady stated

"My elder sister provided me with the money and brother gave his building to be used as school".

52% of the overall respondents revealed that they have started their business with the support of their families, some of them have been provided with money from parents, some from siblings and a few by in-laws. Nearly 28% of the school heads that they used their personal assets and savings for the establishment of the school.

4.4 Family Related Challenges

Family has a great importance in one's life, particularly in a female's life its even greater as she is the one who bears more family responsibilities. The researcher aimed at measuring the extent to which the family of a female entrepreneur influences her work, and to see either that influence is more of positivity or negativity. In this regard following kinds of sentences were occurred by:

"Yes, when I had to buy something for school I take help, rest I do myself nobody helps in management".

Another lady said:

"My husband helps in management he keeps accounts of school".

During interviews researcher came across with many emotional kinds of statements uttered by women school heads, for instance pointing to the issues one of the females says:

"My home and family gets neglected because of my work. It becomes difficult to manage both the things together, but because I have to earn for my family's betterment so I don't quit".

While on the other side some women agreed that their families become hurdles to them sometimes. Saying this, a lady uttered:

"Yeah, I do feel like that when I have to ignore my work because of family. See you have different roles, your mother-in-law demands you to be a good daughter-in-law, your husband wants a good life, your kids want a good mother and these demands become hurdles in your way".

4.5 Socio-Cultural Factors

In the process of entrepreneurship, socio-cultural factors play a significant role. This phrase refers to the invisible components made by man that primarily influence people's behavior, perceptions, and way of life (Akhter & Sumi, 2014). Respondents were encouraged to express their opinions. The interviews revealed five sub-themes, which are described further down. Pakistan is a predominantly male-dominated society, with males typically leading households. Male dominance

is also visible in the lives of female entrepreneurs. About 40% of respondents denoted that women are compelled to accept this dominance because this is deeply rooted in their society. Social settings require women to accept whether they do it willingly or not. The below-given statement says it all:

"Yes it plays a great role, Sargodha is a totally male-dominated society, see I am a working woman I do play a significant role in supporting my family, I own this school still I am being dominated by my husband, in spite of the fact that I am running an institute and I have been awarded teacher of the teachers, still my great teacher is my husband. I need to take his permission whatever decision I make even its simply changing the school timing".

Entrepreneurial women are not generally customary; this view was shared by one of the respondents:

"In Pakistan, society does not allow women to do business outside their homes".

Another respondent also discussed that:

"I have more issues from my surroundings that nobody likes to see me working or being successful".

Women entrepreneurs described that there are certain social boundaries, keeping in those boundaries a woman can exercise her independence but they can never cross those limits. This is said by 35 % of the women school heads. Discussing the same thing a lady said:

"Yes it does up to a great limit; you need to be in a cover (protection by your husband/father). Otherwise, I feel I wasn't able to sit in the place I use to do now. Because our society doesn't allow this".

Many interesting facts were revealed by women entrepreneurs 53% of women described that socio-cultural issues are deeply rooted in society and we have to accept it whether we want to or not, the reasons were said to be feudal background, illiteracy, religious perspective, brought up the pattern, narrow-mindedness percentage for above-mentioned terms was found 13%, 7%, 7%, 13% and 20% respectively.

4.6 Education and Experience

Entrepreneurial education is distinct from commerce and economic education. The primary goal of entrepreneurial education is to foster creativity, innovation, and self-sufficiency while also cultivating personal attributes that support an entrepreneurial mindset (Srivastava, 2017). As a result, a woman's education and experience are critical when starting a business. Many of the survey participants believed that they were having difficulties as a result of a lack of entrepreneurial education and understanding. For example, one of the participants stated;

"I feel I'm not confident in the sense that whenever I have to visit some office I become scared and I literally feel that I should improve my public dealings"

Another respondent said: "I need to learn dictatorship, I'm very polite and sometimes people get the advantage of this weakness".

The results from data showed that 20% of women used to attend workshops which come their way through book publishing companies or any other body. Says a woman;

"Well I use to attend the workshops conducted by book publishers time and again, these workshops are short though but are informative and helpful"

Apart from attending workshops, 35% of female school heads said that their related experience helps them to manage the school. 45% said that they have attended teaching courses like CT, B.Ed. and M.Ed. which are supportive of their work. The overall results described that not even a single women entrepreneur has done with some management degree of professional training in this regard and this is what points to the real challenge in their way to progress.

4.7 Relationship with Stakeholders

Researchers tried to identify the gender-related challenges women entrepreneurs face in terms of their employees. In response to the above-mentioned question, nearly 80% of the people stated that working with a female is easier as compared to men. The reasons they quoted were of diverse nature. Both kinds of statements, favorable and non-favorable were uttered by respondents. Most of the school heads said that they prefer female staff as it is easier to communicate with the same gender which leads to better understanding. They also talked with reference to Islamic and social perspectives and gender-related attributes of female employees. According to women entrepreneurs, it is easy to handle female staff as do not try to dominate their coworkers like men.

Only 14% of the respondent described men as better employees than females for their non-involvement in the internal politics of the institute, one of the ladies explained:

" Males are to the point, they don't get involved in leg-pulling and backbiting like women".

Another argument came up in the favor of male workers, but interestingly the lady who favored men didn't have any male staff in the school except her peon. This shows the double standards, many times during the data collection researcher found contradictions in what people were talking about and what was actually happening. Only 6% of all school heads denoted that there is no difference in working with males or females, one can comfortably work with both.

On the other hand, about 33% of women entrepreneurs use to face payment issues, as the school dues are not paid on time; moreover, usually, the concessions are demanded from the parent's side which leads to many problems for the school. Stating this, a lady uttered the following words;

"Parents do not pay school charges on time. They don't have any feelings that I have to run an institute I have to meet my expenses, they don't even bother".

As cooperation between the school and parents is highly needed for the better learning of the students, the researcher tried to find whether both the parents and school authorities go hand in hand for the betterment of child; the answer was shocking as 45% of the school heads complained that parents don't attend their children properly and leave everything up to school.

4.8 Expectancy Factor

In terms of growth and expansion women, entrepreneurs seem to be so excited and high. 67% of the overall respondents stated excitedly they have expansion plans, though their plans are different the data described that most of them wanted to have their personal school buildings and to have campuses over multiple sites. These types of intentions were expressed by 40% of the ladies working in the educational sector. 13% of females said that want to take their school to college level, while 7% dream to have Hifz sections and again 7% want to have separate campuses for girls and boys.

Well on contrary to above-mentioned results, 26% of the respondents were found confused in terms of expansion and growth, they uttered the kind of statements which can have any sort of meanings, for instance, talks a lady;

"Expansion Mmmmm (pause) it's complicated so many systems are working in this country until and unless you become sure of what thing you should go for. Again each time the education budget comes it is curtailed. So I'm not sure".

Besides this, 7% of the ladies said that they have no expansion plans yet and would like to focus on what is already available to them.

5 Conclusion

Women entrepreneurship has been a hot topic for decades throughout the world, its need and importance have been well understood. And education for being socially preferred and respectful field attracts women for investment; women do represent a higher number in educational entrepreneurship. They are running small-scale schools throughout the country but are still unheard of. The present study explored the perspectives of women's entrepreneurship in education and its challenges. The findings indicated that women are facing many problems: first of all, they didn't come into the field with clear goals and intrinsic motivation rather social norms and individual context seemed to have performed their role in this regard. Secondly, women have financial issues, thus their enterprises are small, moreover, they find it difficult to survive in a competitive atmosphere as schools are being run every here and there. This doesn't end here rather getting admissions becomes a challenge which further makes it tough to meet expenses. Thirdly women lack managerial training, data shows that not even a single lady has attended management courses, thus they are unable to manage effectively. Fourthly women entrepreneurs are not given proper space to progress and excel as they are being ruled by men, seems like they don't actually want to get rid of male dominance or maybe they think it's not possible. This issue influences their decision power negatively. Apart from that many problems still women think positively in terms of growth and expansion; which could be the way forward if women are provided with the support they can definitely work more effectively and productively.

6 Availability of Data and Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding authors.

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