

# Empowering Women through Entrepreneurship: A study in Tamil Nadu, India

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**Abstract**—The entrepreneurship of women is considered to be an effective instrument to the economic development and empowerment of women. The Self Help Groups is considered to be institutional innovation that fosters empowerment of economically and socially deprived women. This paper discusses the differences between women in other forms of enterprises and the Self Help Groups, and attempts to identify the strength of these two forms of enterprising in empowering women.

**Index Terms**—Empowerment, enterprise differentiation, entrepreneurship, self help groups.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment is a new phrase in the vocabulary of gender literature. In a general sense, it refers to empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedoms and opportunities, which they were denied in the past only because of their being women. In a specific sense, women empowerment refers to enhancing their position in the power structure of the society. Empowerment of women has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resource; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally [1]. In today's competitive world, there are various ways by which women get themselves empowered. The entrepreneurship of women is considered to be an effective instrument to the economic development and empowerment of women [2].

While women entrepreneurship in India is encouraged by various Government policies, the Self Help Groups (SHGs) help even economically poor and socially backward women to come together and succeed by their collective efforts [3]. The policies and programmes of the government motivate, assist and guide entrepreneurial development of women. The response of women to the programmes is large and widespread in Tamil Nadu. The success of those women entrepreneurs will significantly speed up the progress of economic development and removal of poverty in the state. As empowerment of women basically depends on gaining financial, social and cultural strength, their performance as entrepreneurs in their business becomes crucial to reach this

goal. In this context a measure of performance of the women entrepreneurs over years would answer the question if they have got empowered at all. A study was thus done to analyze the performance of women entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu. An attempt was also made to find if there is any difference in performance between SHG women entrepreneur and self supporting women entrepreneurs. In addition factors influencing the performance of women entrepreneurs were also analyzed.

The rest of this paper is thus organized as follows: Section II gives a brief review of the literature about this objective, Section III discusses the methodology, Section IV details the analysis and findings and Section V concludes the paper.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been made on women entrepreneurs with reference to various countries and in India. Huntley [4] used a case study approach to explore the life events and experiences that had influenced women to choose entrepreneurship as a career alternative. Most ventured into entrepreneurship because of a desire to be independent and to be in control of their lives. Ohe [5] studied entrepreneurial qualities of women in Japan and the United States. Dolinski [6] studied the growth in women entrepreneurship over the past two decades. Sextan and Kent [7] compared 45 women executives with 48 women entrepreneurs and found that women entrepreneurs were better educated, placed a slightly higher emphasis on their job than on their family. Hisrich and Fuldop [8] found in a study of 50 women entrepreneurs in Hungary that women entrepreneurs played an emerging diverse role in terms of enterprise creation in Hungary. Nelson [9] showed that, women in Jamaica concentrated in business that required small capital outlay, or which were an extension of household activities, such as, small scale retail or dress making / garment manufacturing.

Surti and Sarupriya [10] investigated the psychological factors affecting women entrepreneurs in India. Results indicated that unmarried women experienced less stress and less self-role distance than married women. Singh and Sengupta [11] conducted a study on 45 women who were attending the entrepreneurial development programme held at Delhi from November-December 1983 organised by NIESBUD, FICCI. Vinze's [12] studied of 50 women entrepreneurs of Delhi, showed that all of them found future prospects of their enterprise to be quite bright. Mohiuddin [13] found that women became entrepreneurs due to their economic needs, as a challenge to satisfy some of their personality needs. According to Rathore and Chhabra, (1991) [14] Indian women found it increasingly difficult to

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adjust themselves to the dual role that they have to play as traditional housewives and to compete with men in the field of business and industry.

A brief overview of the literatures would reveal that almost all the studies have attempted to identify factors influencing women to choose entrepreneurship as their career and the challenges they face in due course. There are not many studies to measure the performance of women entrepreneurs and almost no study to relate entrepreneurship with empowerment. This paper thus proves to be novel in its objective as mentioned above.

### III. METHODOLOGY

As the first objective of the paper suggests an attempt was made to measure the performance of women entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu. Though performance is a wide concept involving business profit, growth in terms of net worth, market share, reach out customers to earn their confidence, etc, financial analysts always consider net worth as the appropriate measure to measure performance of any enterprise and hence it is used in this study. To attain the objectives stated in the introduction, data collected from 350 women entrepreneurs was used. In order to analyze the difference in performance between SHG supported women entrepreneurs and self supporting women entrepreneurs, the sample of 350 was divided into two groups: one for those in SHGs (list I - 150) and the other for those outside SHGs but registered with the District Industries Centre (DIC) (list II - 200). In every stage of the analysis, the two groups viz., (i) group-I of SHGs and (ii) group-II of other entrepreneurs were compared to know their relative performance.

To start with, the performance of the women entrepreneurs in both the groups was measured through the net worth of their enterprise. A comparison of the net worth of enterprises of the two groups of women entrepreneurs then follows to analyze if there was any difference due to support received from Self Help Groups. Next a regression analysis was done to identify the variables which had an influence on the net worth of the enterprise and hence the performance of women entrepreneurs. The next step was to measure if entrepreneurship empowered women. This was done by an analysis of the mean score obtained on 20 variables grouped under four heads – rise in economic status, self worth, self confidence and social status. A comparison of this mean score between the two groups was also done to find if there was any difference. As the mean score of the two groups were statistically significant, a discriminant function was specified and estimated to identify the factors that differentiate the two groups.

### IV. ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

#### A. Performance of Women Entrepreneurs (as Measured by their Networth)

The net worth of enterprises of women entrepreneurs of the two groups is shown in Table I.

As can be seen in the table, the smallest size of networth per enterprise in Rs.2.7 lakhs and the largest size is Rs.25 lakhs within the range, the distribution of women

entrepreneurs is skewed towards larger classes (3, 4, 5) in both groups. Yet, all the enterprises come under the category of small and medium enterprises (SME), as the largest value of networth is only Rs.25 lakhs. The SMEs receive support from DIC and ranks on priority consideration.

TABLE I: NETWORTH OF ENTERPRISES OF WOMEN

Sl. No.	Networth classes (Rs. Lakhs)	SHG		Others	
		No.	%	No.	%
1.	2.7 – 5	9	6.0	16	8.0
2.	5.1 – 10	17	11.3	26	13.0
3	10.1 – 15	53	35.4	88	44.0
4	15.1 – 20	41	27.3	53	26.5
5	20.1 – 25	30	20.0	17	8.5
	Total	150	100.0	200	100.0
	Group Mean (Rs.Lakhs)	16.80		13.33	

Among the two groups, enterprises in group I have existed for less than 20 years and 70 percent of them for less than 10 years. Among 200 (non - SHGs) enterprises in group II, 84 percent existed for less than 10 years, 17 percent for 10-20 years, while there are enterprises with 20-30 year (10%) and more than 30 years standing. Hence, SHG firms are relatively younger than other firms. Therefore, the size of networth (as on 2007) is built over relatively fewer years in group – I (SHG), as compared to group-II. In spite of this, average size of networth of enterprises of SHG (group I) women is larger (Rs.16.80 lakhs) than that for other women in group II (Rs.13.33 lakhs). It reveals that entrepreneurs among SHGs are successful in their business in terms of networth, profit and sales value -more progressive than non-SHG entrepreneurs. This may be attributed to the incentives, assistance and support to SHGs in policies and programmes.

#### B. Factors Influencing Net Worth

As net worth is used as a measure of the performance of the entrepreneurs, a regression analysis was performed to identify the factors influencing the networth of the enterprise. While business environment, general price level and seasonality in demand may cause the variations in profit and networth, in a cross section data for one year, they are not much different for the enterprises. So the simple correlation of these variables were all weak and statistically significant (0.321). Similar exercises with other possible variables left five variables to be considered. Then a multiple linear regression equation was specified as follows :

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + e_i$$

where,

Y = Net worth of enterprise i (Rs.Lakhs)

X<sub>1</sub> = Age of the enterprise i (years)

X<sub>2</sub> = size of the enterprise (sales value in Rs'000)

X<sub>3</sub> = Profitability (= % of profit to sales value)

X<sub>4</sub> = Entrepreneurs perception on prospect of success (index with value 65 to 100)

X<sub>5</sub> = Loan as percentage of investment (%)

e = random error term

β<sub>0</sub>, β<sub>1</sub> ... β<sub>5</sub> are regression parameters to be estimated,

i = 1, 2, ... 150 and 200.

Above linear regression equation was estimated by ordinary least squares (OLS) method, separately for 150 observations in group I and 200 observations in Group II.

### C. For Group – I

The regression equation estimated for 150 enterprises in group I is presented below in detail:

$$\hat{Y}_1 = 5.097^{NS} + 0.415X_1^{**} + 0.0716X_2^{NS} + 1.208X_3^{**} + 0.231X_4^{**} + 0.106X_5^{**}$$

$$(1.370) \quad (2.745) \quad (-0.801) \quad (7.958) \quad (5.428) \quad (+2.989)$$

$$R^2 = 0.988^{**} \quad R^2 = 0.987^{**} \quad F = 717.347^{**} \quad d.f = 144$$

Note :  $\wedge$  - Indicates estimated value.

$Y_1$  = Net worth of group I SHGs.

NS – Not significant at 5% level.

\* - Significant at 5% level

\*\* - Significant at 1% level

d.f. – degrees of freedom ( $n-k-1$ )

Figures within ( ) are t values

The co-efficient of multiple determination –  $R^2$  has a large value, 0.988 showing that the five independent variables specified in the equation would explain nearly 99 per cent of variation in net worth of the enterprises of SHG women. The regression constant is 5.597, but is not statistically significant. So there is no serious error in specification of the regression equation. All the partial regression co-efficient are expected *a priori* to have positive sign. However, one co-efficient (of  $X_2$ ) has a negative sign but it is not statistically significant, implying that the variables  $X_2$  (Size of enterprise measured by annual sales value) has no influence on net worth. All other regression co-efficients have the expected positive sign and the high value of  $F$  (at 717.37) shows high explanatory power of the equation. Thus, the estimated multiple linear regression equation has a good fit and it is valid to draw inferences.

The partial regression co-efficient ( $\beta^1$ ) of  $X_1$  – age of the enterprise in years, is 0.415 and it is statistically significant at five percent level. It shows that existence of the enterprise by one more year, would increase, *ceteris paribus*, the net worth of the enterprise by Rs.41,500 at its mean level. The inference is that the enterprises of SHG women and building their net worth over the year i.e., they are growing.

The variable  $X_3$  – profitability in percentage to sales value – has a positive and statistically significant (at one percent level) partial regression coefficient. Its value of 1.208 shows that every one percent increase in profitability of the enterprises of SHG women, would increase, *ceteris paribus* net worth from its mean level by Rs.1.208lakhs. The inference is that SHG enterprises save and invest part of their annual profits to add to their assets.

The confidence and determination of SHG entrepreneurs was measured by their perception reported on a five point graded scale. The mean score for five statements representing this variable is expressed as percentage to the maximum possible mean score of 5 (for totally strong agreement). The percentage varies from 65 to 100, revealing high to total confidence of the women entrepreneurs. The co-efficient of this variable ( $X_4$ ) is positive and statistically significant at one percent level. Its estimated value of 0.231 shows clearly that *ceteris paribus*, higher the confidence larger in the net worth.

The net worth of an enterprise increases by investment, that is financed partly by own fund (saved profit – owner equity) and partly by loans. Thus, there are additions to both assets and liability of the enterprises, their balance determines the addition to net worth. The effect of borrowing on net worth is shown by the partial regression co-efficient of  $X_5$  – the percentage of loan in investment. The variable had a range from 36 percent to 61 per cent. Evaluated at mean level, an increase in percentage of loan in total investment by one percent would *ceteris paribus* increase net worth of the enterprises of SHG women by Rs.10, 600 at its mean level. The inference is that loans significantly contribute to the growth of net worth of enterprises of SHG women. In other words, loans add more to assets than to liability.

Thus, the results show that profitability of the enterprise, loans availed, confidence to succeed of the women entrepreneurs are important determinants of growth of net worth of the enterprises of SHG women over the years of their existence, irrespective of the size of enterprise, at present.

### D. For Group II

The regression equation estimated for 200 enterprises in Group II is presented as follows in detail.

$$\hat{Y}_2 = 13.058^{NS} + 0.843X_1^{**} + 0.333X_2^{**} + 0.974X_3^{**} + 0.198X_4^{**} + 0.770X_5^{**}$$

$$(1.320) \quad (3.981) \quad (5.229) \quad (5.663) \quad (2.962) \quad (7.656)$$

$$R^2 = 0.982^{**} \quad R^2 = 0.980^{**} \quad F = 590.164^{**} \quad d.f = 194$$

Note :  $\wedge$  - Indicates estimated value.

$Y_2$  = group II - Non SHG's

NS – Not significant at 5% level.

\* - Significant at 5% level

\*\* - Significant at 1% level

d.f. – degrees of freedom ( $n-k-1$ )

The co-efficient of multiple determination –  $R^2$  has a larger value, 0.982 showing that the five independent variables specified in the equation would explain nearly 98 per cent of variation in net worth of the enterprises of non-SHG women. The regression constant is 13.058, but is not statistically significant. So there is no serious error in specification of the regression equation. All the partial regression co-efficient have positive sign as expected *a priori*. The high value of  $F$  (at 590.164) shows high explanatory power of the equation. Thus, the estimated multiple linear regression equation has a good fit and it is valid to draw inferences.

The partial regression co-efficient ( $\beta_1$ ) of  $X_1$  – age of the enterprise in years, is 0.333 and it is statistically significant at one per cent level. It shows that existence of the enterprise by one more year, would increase, *ceteris paribus*, the net worth of the enterprise by Rs.33,300 at its mean level. The inference is that the enterprises of the non SHG women is building their net worth over the years i.e., they are growing.

The variable  $X_2$  - size of enterprise measured by annual sales value in thousand rupees, has a positive size and is statistically significant (at one percent level). Its value of 0.843, shows that the sales of the enterprise of non SHG women, would increase, *ceteris paribus*, net worth from its mean level by Rs. 84, 300 for an increase of sales value by

Rs.1000, from its value mean level. The inference is that the sales enterprise of non SHG women significantly contributes to the growth of the net worth of the enterprises.

The variable  $X_3$  – Profitability in percentage to sales value has a positive and statistically significant (at one percent level) partial regression co-efficient. Its value 0.974 shows that profitability of the enterprises of SHG women, would increase, *ceteris paribus*, net worth from its mean level by Rs. 97,400 for an increase of profitability by one percent from its mean level. The inference is that non SHG enterprises save and invest part of their annual profits to add to their assets.

The confidence and determination of non SHG women entrepreneurs was measured by their perception reported in a five point graded scale. The mean score for five statements representing their variable is expressed as percentage to the maximum possible mean score of 5 (for totally strong agreement). The percentage varies from 65 to 100 revealing high total confidence of the women entrepreneurs. The co-efficient of this variable ( $X_4$ ) is positive and statistically significant at one percent level. Its estimated value of 0.198 shows clearly that *ceteris paribus*, higher the confidence of the entrepreneur longer is the net worth of the enterprise.

The effect of borrowings for investment on net worth is shown by the partial regression co-efficient of  $X_5$  the percentage of loan in investment. The variable had a range from 22 percent to 54 percent. Evaluated at mean level, an increase in percentage of loan in total investment by one percent, would *ceteris paribus* increase net worth of the enterprises of non SHG women by Rs.77,000 at its mean level. The inference is that loans significantly contribute to the growth of net worth of enterprise of non-SHG women. In other words, loans add more to assets than to liability.

Thus, the results show that profitability of the enterprise, loans availed, confidence of the women entrepreneurs to succeed are important determinants of growth of net worth of the enterprises of non SHG women over the years of their existence. The size of the enterprise also has an impact on its net worth in group-II.

Therefore, results clearly show that the success of women entrepreneurs – both SHG and others – depends upon their self confidence in making it a success, loans available to make investment, profitability. There is a scale effect, as size of enterprise (sales value) has a positive impact on net worth (at least for group II). If care is taken to use profit and loan to increase net worth, the enterprises would growth over the years.

#### E. Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship

As discussed in the methodology section, the following four categories of variables have been identified to measure if women have got empowered through entrepreneurship: Rise in economic status, self worth, self confidence and social status.

These qualities bring to the person empowered economic, spiritual and social strength. It marks confidence in one's own capabilities characterized by a positive image of self, proactive attitude, ability to make enlightened decisions and leadership to influence others. When empowerment of women is attempted through entrepreneurship development,

the process begins with success in enterprise management in terms of economic gains and proceeds to strengthen other qualities. In order to evaluate the empowerment level of women in both the groups, the women entrepreneurs were asked to give specific benefits from their experience as entrepreneurs for 10 years or longer. Their response is summarized in Table II:

TABLE II: BENEFITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP-EMPOWERMENT

S.No.	Benefits of entrepreneurship	Mean scores	
		Group I	Group II
<b>A.</b>	<b>Rise in Economic Status</b>		
1	Increased income	4.15	4.21
2	Increased consumption	3.63	4.01
3	Control over spending	3.90	3.47
4	Confidence in sustaining trend	4.68	4.27
<b>B</b>	<b>Self worth</b>		
5	Finds greater ability to lead	3.72	3.28
6	To work in groups	4.08	3.43
7	To resolve conflict	3.65	3.58
8	Freedom to make		
	- business decision	3.86	3.93
9	- on life	3.68	3.30
10	Gets recognition in work	4.24	3.86
<b>C</b>	<b>Self confidence</b>		
11	To be proactive	4.10	4.21
12	To face critics	4.56	3.92
13	To take risks	3.82	4.15
14	To influence others	3.60	3.54
<b>D</b>	<b>Social status</b>		
15	Positive image	4.20	4.34
16	More gender equality	3.50	3.38
17	Sociability – net working	4.18	3.96
18	Involvement in community works	3.52	3.28
19	Involvement in political activities	2.16	3.22
20	Encouraging other women to entrepreneurship	4.35	3.08
<b>E</b>	<b>Over all group mean score</b>	3.879	3.721

All but one item had mean score values larger than three in group I. One exception is involvement in political activity. For group II, all items have mean score values larger than three. The mean score values larger than three show positive improvement in the variables: economic status, self worth, self confidence and social status of women entrepreneurs. Hence we conclude that 'Entrepreneurship has Empowered women'. As shown by the overall mean score, women entrepreneurs in SHG are more empowered than other (non SHG) entrepreneurs. The difference of mean scores is statistically significant ( $t=2.897$ ). This difference suggested discriminant analysis to identify variables that discriminated the two groups.

#### F. Factors Differentiating Empowerment of Women between the Groups

Nine variables were identified as likely causes of differences between the two groups of empowerment, by them four variables were dropped because they had very weak correlation with the index of empowerment (mean score over 20 items of Table 2 for each respondent). With the remaining five variables a canonical discriminant function was specified and estimated for the pooled data of 350 respondents. The estimated CDF and parameters are presented below:

$$Z = 6.405 + 0.136X_1 + 0.431X_2 + 0.098X_3 + 0.216X_4 - 0.079X_5$$

where,

Z = Discriminant index

X<sub>1</sub> = Age of the enterprise (in years)

X<sub>2</sub> = Size of the enterprise in sales value (in Rs. '000)

X<sub>3</sub> = Age of the entrepreneur (in years)

X<sub>4</sub> = Educational level of the entrepreneur as measured by number of years of schooling and training (in years)

X<sub>5</sub> = Confidence index (Mean score for items 11 to 14 in Table V expressed as percentage to the maximum possible score of 5 (%))

TABLE III: TEST FOR EQUALITY OF GROUP MEANS

Variables	Wilk's lambda	F	Sig.
X1	0.877	15.129	0.000
X2	0.801	26.782	0.000
X3	0.976	12.621	0.018
X4	0.753	17.308	0.000
X5	0.955	15.147	0.000

Box's M = 64.465 F = 6.772 Sig : 0.000

Eigen value = 0.392 Cumulative Variance 100%

Canonical correlation = 0.746

Wilk's lambda = 0.718

Chi. Square = 34.800

Significance = 0.000

Cutting Score (Zc) = 0.337

The estimated CDF showed that, the five variables significantly discriminated the two groups of women entrepreneurs. The discriminating power is seen by the percentage of correct classification of members of the two groups. The classification is shown below:

TABLE IV: CLASSIFICATION RESULTS

	Groups	Predicted Group Members		Total
		Group I	Group II	
Original count members	G-1	129	21	150
	G-2	14	186	200
%	G-1	86.0	14.0	100.0
	G-2	7.0	95.0	100.0

Total correctly classified (%) = 89.5

The result of classification shows a high predictive power. The relative discriminating power of the five variables is studied by calculating R<sub>j</sub> as follows:

As seen in the values of R<sub>j</sub>s, size of the enterprise (X<sub>2</sub>) is most discriminating between the groups. It is followed by confidence of the women entrepreneur (X<sub>5</sub>), age of the enterprise (X<sub>1</sub>) educational status of the entrepreneur (X<sub>4</sub>) and lastly, by age of the entrepreneur. The results are consistent. It reveals that, effort must be taken to strengthen self confidence of the entrepreneurs through education-formal and training for technical and managerial skills. Entrepreneurs have to be encouraged to increase the size of business (sales value).

TABLE V: RELATIVE DISCRIMINATING POWER OF THE VARIABLE

Sl.No.	Group I Means	Group II means	Discriminant co-efficient	I <sub>i</sub>	R <sub>j</sub>
1	9.9400	13.9667	0.13586	0.4032	0.1847
2	5.4406	12.6934	0.43105	0.7253	0.3323
3	37.9400	35.2833	0.09792	0.2656	0.1217
4	13.2200	16.3167	0.21577	0.3097	0.1419
5	85.3600	90.1500	0.07901	0.4791	0.2194
				2.1829	1.0000

Note: I<sub>j</sub> = 1/(K<sub>j</sub> Mean (X<sub>j0</sub> - X<sub>j1</sub>)); R<sub>j</sub> = I<sub>j</sub>/E<sub>j</sub> = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

## V. CONCLUSION

The results show that profitability of the enterprise, loans availed, confidence of women entrepreneurs to succeed are important determinants of the growth of net worth of the enterprises of SHG women over the years of their existence, irrespective of the size of entrepreneurs at present. Entrepreneurship of women has enhanced their economic status and decision making power. Women entrepreneurs are aware of opportunities available to them, but there is scope for improvement in it. Economic status, self worth, self confidence and social status of women entrepreneurs are the variables that define empowerment of women. Women entrepreneurs in SHGs are more empowered than other (Non SHG) entrepreneurs.

If women gain economic strength, they gain both visibility and a voice at home, workplace and community [15]. This has an impact on their social status in terms of increase in their literacy, education of their children and family well being. Therefore, empowerment of women has a rich payoff in economic development and egalitarian goals of the society and SHG's seem to be the most viable option for empowering the backward women.

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