

Constraints and abundant opportunities facing Women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh: A relational perspective

A.B.M Anamul Haque¹, Mr.Kazi Md.Barkat Ali²

¹ Graduate Student, Department of Economics, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Pabna, Bangladesh.

² Associate professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Chittagong University, Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Abstract: Women entrepreneurship is now a rapidly growing socio-economic phenomenon in developing countries like Bangladesh. The real situation of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh is not respectable. The aim of the study is to find out the major challenges and opportunities affecting in female entrepreneurship in Bangladesh. The paper integrates salient micro-and macro-level perspectives and provides a rounded account of opportunities and constraints as part of a holistic interdependent system. It also finds out the reasons behind the success of the women entrepreneurship. This research based on secondary data have been used to conduct the study and use the SPSS. The questionnaire of the paper included questions about economic problems, family related issues, social constraints and other limitations faced by women entrepreneurs and the reasons behind their success

Keywords: Constraints and abundants, Opportunities, Women Entrepreneurs, Bangladesh.

Date of Submission: 07-10-2019

Date of Acceptance: 22-10-2019

I. Introduction

Women entrepreneurs are a small but steadily growing minority in the realm of Bangladeshi's trade and manufacturing, which is a describe trend in conformity with the national strategy of empowerment and utilization of the productive or economic potentiality of women. Entrepreneurship has been regarded as one of the important determinants of industrial growth both in the developed and in the developing countries like Bangladesh. Despite its importance for the economy, the emergence of women entrepreneurship is a new phenomenon all over the world. Women entrepreneurs have become the important players in the entrepreneurial landscape (Acs et al., 2005; Langowitz and Minniti, 2007).

In Bangladesh gender discrimination is deeply imbedded in the social structure. Women are discriminated everywhere in family, society, workplace and political area. The real situation of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh is not good. Lack of raw materials (75%), lack of capitals (90%), social barriers (95%) Unsecured communication system (81 %), lack of efficient workers (60%), Lack of proper training (86%), sexual harassments (65%), religious believe and social customs (71 %), family restriction (45%) [Source: A situation analysis of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry]. From a time when women were not allowed to venture out of their houses, women, now a days have improved education standards and participate in social and political activities with equal enthusiasm as men (Rani and Sinha,2016). The work of Wirtz and Lovelock (2001) was clearly demonstrated that more women are entering into the labor market. However, the current technological development, somehow threatened the job market opportunities. As a result, most of these women choose to start their own business and become entrepreneur.

The studies of the paper tried to focus on how the problems of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are tackle and continue struggle to reach goal.83% entrepreneurship established between the last(2000-2007) % [Source: A situation analysis of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry].25.9% of own women entrepreneurship of the total entrepreneurship in Bangladesh.(Mastercard index of women entrepreneurs,2018).This is indicating that women in Bangladesh are gradually becoming interested in business and entrepreneurial activities.

II. Objectives of the study

The prime objective of the study is to find out the major challenges and opportunities affecting in women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh.

The specific objectives of the research are as following:

- To ascertain the status of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.
- To investigate the problems and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.
- To analysis why people give more preference to women entrepreneur.

III. Research Methodology

The study used a graphical method, line chart and table to explore women entrepreneurs scenario in Bangladesh. These include research design, the target population and size, the research instruments for the data collection, the sampling technique and method to be used for data analysis. The study was conducted in women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

The women entrepreneurs have a variety of small-scale activities spread across the county, among them handicraft, food processing, home textiles/garments, restaurants, parlor and trade. Bangladesh has a rich agricultural fertile land, well

developed formal and informal activities and benefits from a thriving entrepreneurial culture which has given to rise several micro and small scale women enterprises.

The study was aimed at examining the constraints faced by entrepreneurs operating in the MSE sector and potential which have responded to those constraints. Qualitative data was collected. The research design used quantitative and qualitative techniques. The population for the survey involved in this study consisted of 130 entrepreneurs in the micro and small scale women enterprises (MSWEs) sector in Bangladesh.

The survey used simple random sampling technique and Stratified random sampling technique. This technique was used to group population into homogeneous subsets that share similar characteristics and ensure equitable representation of the population. The data was obtained from primary sources which included direct interaction and interview schedules with various respondents; and secondary sources mainly from books, research dissertations, publications of Bangladesh Bureau of statistics (BBS), journals, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI), other documents on MSEs, and entrepreneurship related literature.

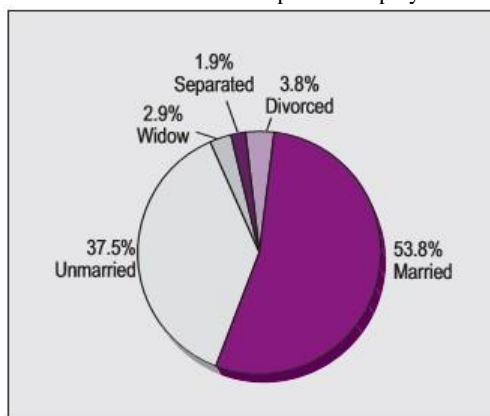
In this research process three methods were used namely: interviews, discussion and observations. The interview schedule was the main method used to collect primary data. Both open-ended and structured questionnaires were administered. The interview schedule was administered by researcher. A discussion was held to assess what were considered as major constraints for women entrepreneurs their area of business. Observation method was adopted for clarifying information received from the respondents. Data from the respondents was analyzed and translated into useful information using percentages and the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Frequency distributions and tables were used to draw conclusions.

Factor affecting female entrepreneurship:

Bangladesh's women are most disadvantage group in the society. The motives for pursuing entrepreneurship have received systematic attention with various authors referring to gender inequality as a push factor for female entrepreneurship in developed and developing economies (Aidis et al., 2007; Baughn et al., 2006). Development of women entrepreneurship is an significant aspect to empower Entrepreneurship that has become an important occupation among the women of Bangladesh today at numerous levels of the society, both in the urban and the rural areas (Ali et al., 2017). Women from all classes of Bangladesh want to stand up before everyone in their own right and not at someone's daughter or wife. They want a gender-friendly business environment, a vision for women's economic empowerment. They also have had a dream having a collective dream to ensure a gender justice in economy especially in private sector of the country (Ahmed-President BWCCI). Bangladesh is one of the countries which rectified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Constitution of Bangladesh also grants equal rights to women and men in all spheres of public life [Article 28(1), and 28(3)2]. In Bangladesh women constitute slightly less than half of the population. The majority of them are underprivileged, under nourished, illiterate and poor. According to the 2010 labor force survey (LFS), the labor force of Bangladesh was estimated at 54.1 million, more than 16 million being women (Afroze et al., 2014). But there are not enough employment opportunities for women in Bangladesh. There 16.1% women of total women entrepreneurs involve in Garments/Home textile sector, 1.6% Printing, 69.4% Handicraft, 3.2% Agro based, 4.8% Parlor and 3.2% Food (Source: BWCCI).

However fast GDP growth has not translated into fast employment growth. In South Asian region many countries total female employment is increasing as a gradually but employment rate is declining than before. Between 2005 and 2015, female employment rates declined by 5 percent per in India, 3 percent in Bhutan, and 1 percent per in Sri Lanka. The women in developing countries are involving as an entrepreneurship who are interesting self dependent, Educated women, Commercial family women, Married women, Divorce and Widow women. On the other hand, a lot of unmarried women have also interest and involve to the entrepreneurship.

Figure-1: Percentage distribution of women entrepreneurship by their marital status (BWCCI)



In this study, 53.8% of Women are married, 37.5% are Unmarried, 3.8% are Divorce, 2.9% are Widow and only 1.9% are separated. The number of women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh gradually increasing day by day. In 2017, 25.8% of total entrepreneur was owned by women but 2018, this percentage is 25.9%. Though the increasing percentage rate is very merely but have a good news that, this position is running higher than various strong economic country (Masterd card index 2018).

The issues that should be considered to take into account and this kind of business will be incurred:

- Acquired knowledge and efficiency
- Self interested
- Experience
- Access Capital
- Training (Online and Offline)
- Market demand
- Social Individual and Aggregate problem solution competence
- Personal communication

Brief background information about working women in Bangladesh:

Bangladesh is a south Asian country and a founder member of SAARCE. At the before, Bangladesh was Indian colony and enrolled by Brittain. In 1947 Indian colony liberated from Britain and divided between India and Pakistan. In 1971 Bangladesh has become liberate and establish as an independent country. Female in the traditional Bangladeshi culture have been viewed mostly in terms of their roles as housewife of the home. The socio-political and economic change impinged on the Bangladeshi the past few decades, however, has affected the perception to varying degrees in different women. Bangladesh is an overpopulated country with limited resources and higher social stratification. Economic, political and social recognition are determined on the basis of gender, class and location (WED, 2001). Nearly half of the populations are women (sex ratio 106). Since few women participate in the mainstream of economic activities and the enormous potentiality of the population is unutilized. For instance, only 16% of women are self-employed out of 66% self-employed citizen (based on entrepreneurship status) Ahammad and Huq (2013).

In these figure:-2 represent Labor force female participation rate 1990 to 2017 increasing at a gradually. In 1990, 23.111% of women are participated in labor force but 2017 these participation rate are rising 33.037%. These figures also represent that Women are gradually more interested in participation work than before and they face competition with man at work market. Frequently entrepreneurship has become an important profession among women in both rural and urban area. Urban area's women are engaged in various small and medium entrepreneurship such as Online shop, Parlor, handicraft, fashion house, freelancing and home textile. On the other hand, women in rural areas are being self employed through primary agriculture, secondary agricultural and non-agricultural related sector as entrepreneurs. These activities are vegetable, gardening, fish farming, poultry rearing, food processing, tailoring, handicraft, rice processing, tree planting, livestock etc.

Fig-2: Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate) 1990 to 2017.



Source: World Bank (Labor Participation rate as Women)-2017

Female entrepreneurship has received growing attention in recent years both at the academic and policy level. Their contribution to the economy is noted to be higher than that of men in entrepreneurial activities (Miniti, 2010). This survey makes 300 entrepreneurs in Bangladeshi women entrepreneurs Table-1. Where 10.9% women entrepreneurs are Post Graduate, 16.8% are Graduation,

Tab-1: Percentage distribution of women entrepreneurs by the level of education.

Level of Education	%
Post Graduation	10.9
Graduation	16.8
HSC	26.7
SSC	34.7
Class Eight	5.9
Primary (class five)	1.0
No formal education	4.0
Total	100

Source: Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI).

5.9% women entrepreneurs pass class Eight, 1% are Primary level. Only 4% women entrepreneurs interviewed have no formal education but they could read and write (BWCCI).

Women entrepreneurs' barriers in Bangladesh:

Traditions regarding what work are appropriate for women result in a gender division of labor in productive work that limits the potential of women need to be successful. Often the activities most readily available to women are those most similar to their domestic tasks. This is similarity between the productive and reproductive work women do tends to make their productive work undervalued. Women tend to face internal constraints resulting from their gender role socialization like no right to use their own earned money, other members pressurize for their earned money, suspect women when they return home late even torture physically etc. They often have lacking in leadership in family decision making resulting in less self-confidence and those personality traits important to entrepreneurs such as assertiveness, ambition and vision. This can make them unwilling to risk and expand their enterprise .Lack of collective platform to raise voice on their pertinent issues.Domestic and external violence hinders the growth of women entrepreneurs. Due to Low or no implementation of the existing laws the situation remains poor. Major barriers of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are:

- Lack of Capital (Financial problem):
 - Women have no land property though they have no documents on land.
 - Bank wants a lot of particulars, but it is not possible to provide by WE
 - Lack of information regarding bank loan
 - Lack of cooperation of Bank officials Complicated loan form
- Price discrimination (Pay less due to women):
- Lack of Knowledge and skill for Advocacy campaign,
- Lack of women leadership
 - Lack of education
 - Less confidence of women entrepreneurs
 - Lack of opportunity due to patriarchal mind set
 - Dependency on male
- Lack of professional skill
- Corruption
 - Pay bribe to different public and private institution
- Lack of Mass-Media Involvement,
- Social obstacles/Social mind set,
- Lack of Knowledge and skill for design and product development,
- Marketing,
- Violence against women
 - Have no access to decision making process in their family
 - Acid throwing
 - Physical and mental torture
 - Have to pay dowry for daughters weeding ceremony
- Sexual harassment
- ICT (knowledge and skill)
 - Lack of information
 - Lack of knowledge how to use the information
 - Capacity building and training
- Lack of training of women entrepreneurs
- Less quality training
- Lack of quality trainer
- Lack of post training facilities
- Lack of need based training
- Lack of need based technical training
- Lack of skill on product design
- Lack of information,

- Lack of Modern technology,
- Bureaucracy,
- Difficulty in finding right contacts for business,
- Lack of knowledge on Taxation and registration,
- Domestic Violence and Negative attitude of the Society

The potentiality for women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh:

Women empowerment is being a big concern in Bangladesh and it is good that the government, Multinational corporation (MNCs) and other organizations are doing their bit. The government has taken many steps to bring women into the limelight as the inclusion of women is the key to advancing society. The government has emphasized ICT training which offers scholarships and job opportunity for women. The ICT ministry has arranged many programs such as the Digital World, ICT Expo, National Hackathon, Connecting Startup Bangladesh etc as well. Under a tri-party partnership, ICT training buses are in form to train female students in rural areas.

Bangladesh is becoming a role model for women empowerment in the world as Bangladeshi women are in leadership positions at every sphere of national and social life. Describing various measures taken by the government to ensure holistic empowerment of women. Bangladesh government introduced gender budget (3,749 crore for FY2019-20) which is unique in the world. Bangladeshi women vary to break many glass ceilings by inducting more qualified women in top positions in judiciary, administration, defence, and diplomacy. There are female peacekeepers holding their flag high in many UN peacekeeping missions.

Table-2: Sector-wise percentage distribution of the respondents:

Name of the sectors	% enterprises
Garments/Home textile	16.1
Printing	1.6
Handicraft	69.4
Agro based	3.2
Parlor	4.8
Food	3.2
Others	1.6
Total	100

Source: Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI)-2008.

Among 130 women entrepreneurs interviewed, majority of women entrepreneurs (69.4%) were found to be involved in handicraft sector followed by garments/home-textile (16%). The table-2 also shows that women are becoming in non-traditional sectors like printing and media, food business, etc. Its observation makes a judgement that majority Women in Bangladesh are gradually increasing as an entrepreneur by Homemade product.

Concluding remarks:

Female entrepreneurship has attracted increasing attention in recent years in light of concrete evidence of its importance for economic growth and development. This paper has examined female entrepreneurship in the Bangladesh context based on in-depth interviews with a sample of ten women entrepreneurs. Our Research in the Bangladesh context suggests that women entrepreneurs are facing a variety of obstacles with the most important attributed to the nature of normative institutions. The ascription of women and childcare responsibilities has created latent tension and guilt feeling for all the women interviewed, given pressures for conformity with prevailing (un-condified) value standards.

Our research makes two important contributions. The study highlights through women entrepreneur's interpretive accounts the complex interplay of individual-organizational institutional variables in shaping their entrepreneurial identities, career choice and perception of opportunities and constraints. This integrated framework also helps accentuate and bring to light the embeddedness of entrepreneurship and its context specificity, in the sense that our study clearly alerts to the strong salience of normative constraints encountered by Asian women generally, which has not been systematically studied and addressed in the mostly mainstream micro level studies relating to the topic. This paper has provided fruitful initial insights into factor affecting female entrepreneurship from a developing country perspective. The paper makes a clear that an institutional focus is very much needed in developing countries, it should be supplemented by a dynamic view that recognizes the role of individual agency and learning capacity over time.

Reference

- [1]. Achtenhagen, L. and Welter, F. (2003), "Female entrepreneurship in Germany: context development and its reflection in German media", in Butler, J. (Ed.), *New Perspectives on Women Entrepreneurship*, Information Age Publishing, Greenwich, CT, pp. 77-100.
- [2]. Acs, Z., Arenius, P., Hay, M. and Minniti, M. (2005), *2004 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor – Exclusive Report*, London Business School, London and Babson College, Babson Park, MA
- [3]. Haddad, N. (1993), "Entrepreneurship in small industries in the Arab countries", *Proceedings of the Expert Group Meeting on Creation of Indigenous Entrepreneurship*, ESCWA, Damascus.
- [4]. Langowitz, N. and Minniti, M. (2007), "The entrepreneurial propensity of women", *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 341-6
- [5]. Ahmed, M. U., (2003). "The Economics of Small-Scale Industries Revisited," , Dhaka, Bangladesh
- [6]. Allen, I. E., Elam, A., Langowitz, N. & Dean, M. (2008). *2007 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report on women and entrepreneurship*. Babson College: The Centre for Women's Leadership. Begum
- [7]. Gartner, W. B., Shaver, K. G., Carter, N. M. and Reynolds, P. D. (2004), *The Handbook of Entrepreneurial Dynamics*, Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- [8]. Carter, N. and Kolvareid, I. (1997), "Women starting new businesses: the experience in Norway and the US", paper presented at OECD Conference on Women Entrepreneurs in SMEs, Paris.
- [9]. Idris, A. M. M. & Mahmood, R. (2003). *Bank managers' perceptions of the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs*. Malaysian Management Review.
- [10]. DeTienne, D. and Chandler, G. (2007), "The role of gender in opportunity identification", *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 365-86.
- [11]. Gephart, R. (2004), "Qualitative research and the academy of management journal", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 47 No. 4, pp. 454-62.
- [12]. Scott, W.R. (1995), *Institutions and Organizations*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- [13]. Syed, J. and Ozbilgin, M. (in press), "A relational framework for international transfer of diversity management practices", *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (in press).
- [14]. International Finance Corporation & Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (2007), *Women Entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa: Characteristics, Contributions and Challenges*, International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, Washington, DC.
- [15]. Jamali, D., Safieddine, A. and Daouk, A. (2006), "The glass ceiling: some positive trends from the Lebanese banking sector", *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 21, pp. 625-42.
- [16]. Jamali, D., Sidani, Y. and Safieddine, A. (2005), "Constraints facing working women in Lebanon: an insider View", *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 20 No. 8, pp. 581-94.
- [17]. Langowitz, N. and Minniti, M. (2007), "The entrepreneurial propensity of women", *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 341-64.
- [18]. McManus, P.A. (2001), "Women's participation in self-employment in western industrialized nations", *International Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 70-97.
- [19]. Marlow, S. and Patton, D. (2005), "All credit to men? Entrepreneurship, finance, and gender", *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, Vol. 29 No. 6, pp. 717-35.
- [20]. Minniti, M., Arenius, P. and Langowitz, N. (2005), *2004 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Special Topic Report: Women and Entrepreneurship*, Center for Women's Leadership at Babson College, Babson Park, MA.
- [21]. Noorderhaven, N., Thurik, R., Wonnekers, S. and van Stel, A. (2004), "The role of dissatisfaction and per capita income in explaining self-employment across 15 European countries", *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 447-66
- [22]. North, D. (1990), *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- [23]. Mustafa, K.M. (2019), "Female entrepreneurship in Bangladesh" *The Financial Express*. March 21, Dhaka.