

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS EXPERIENCES IN KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the gender challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the Karachi city. Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in society, driving significant positive change. Their businesses create jobs, contributing to employment and lowering unemployment rates. Given the importance of this topic, we conducted a survey using a structured questionnaire that included both objective and subjective questions for a comprehensive understanding. We interviewed 50 participants, exploring their work experiences, industries, the various gender challenges they encounter, and the impact of these challenges on their business operations. The analysis revealed that the majority were engaged in Fashion, beauty and wellness, food and catering, and digital services. A 55% of participants had 1-5 years of work experience, 31% had 6-10 years, and 14% had plus 10 years in the industry. Notably, 82% of participants reported facing gender-related challenges in their work. Participants expressed that these challenges significantly hindered their business operations. Despite these obstacles, 70% of participants did not receive any entrepreneurial support from local government or organizations.

Key words: Gender Equality, Gender Challenges, Entrepreneurship, Karachi.

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INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurs are globally recognized for their ability to drive economic growth while promoting gender equality and social development. In Karachi they play crucial roles in business operations. However, their contributions are often hindered by various challenges as they navigate their entrepreneurial journeys [1]. This research aims to identify the specific

gender-related challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Karachi and to document their coping strategies. Utilizing qualitative research methods, this study seeks to understand the barriers these women encounter, the impact on their businesses, and the support systems available to help them overcome these challenges. The significance of this research lies in its focus on the lived

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experiences of women entrepreneurs in Karachi, highlighting the obstacles they face due to their gender identity.

By advancing the understanding of gender dynamics in entrepreneurship, the study will provide valuable insights for stakeholders involved in promoting women's entrepreneurship in the region. Identifying and understanding the barriers and constraints affecting women entrepreneurs requires targeted interventions and support networks that can enhance their business success and contribute to community development in Karachi.

Through qualitative methodologies, including face-to-face interviews and thematic data analysis, this research project aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the situations faced by female business owners. Participants will include women entrepreneurs from various industries across Karachi, allowing for a diverse range of observations. The study will explore their life stories, business struggles, and adaptation strategies, amplifying their voices and fostering meaningful solutions for their business environment [2]. Ultimately, this research aims to expand academic knowledge regarding the gender challenges experienced by female entrepreneurs in Karachi. It will also reveal the obstacles that women business owners face in influencing regulatory and operational measures, while advocating for improved conditions that support the growth of female entrepreneurship and its significant social and economic contributions to the area [3-6]. The current study is significant for both academia and policy-making as it sheds light on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the remote areas of Karachi, emphasizing their experiences. The findings have important implications for policymakers, advocating for increased female participation in entrepreneurship by facilitating support and reducing barriers [7-9].

This study examines the issues and gender-based challenges that women encounter when starting businesses in Karachi. Women entrepreneurs in these remote areas face numerous obstacles due to their distance from markets, inadequate infrastructure, and funding limitations. The objective was to identify the challenges women face in sustaining their entrepreneurial ventures in the Karachi district.

METHODOLOGY

This research investigates the gender-related challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the business landscape of Karachi, Pakistan. The study focused on women who run businesses in the area, targeting a sample size of 50 participants. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation across various industries and business sizes [10]. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with the selected participants to explore their experiences and challenges related to gender in their entrepreneurial journeys. All interviews were conducted with the participants' consent, and field notes were taken to complement the questionnaires.

The data analysis process involved transferring information to SPSS statistical software for categorization, allowing for the identification of common experiences, challenges, and strategies related to gender. Following the analysis, the results were tabulated and presented graphically [11].

Ethical approval was secured from the relevant research ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with strict measures in place to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study. Participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw at any time [12, 13].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents its findings through detailed narrative descriptions and quotations from participants. These findings illuminate

the specific gender-related challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Karachi, as well as their coping strategies and potential recommendations. The results can inform policies and initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs in the region.

Descriptive analysis revealed that 55% of participants had been in business for 1-5 years, while 31% had been in business for 6-10 years, and 14% had been in business for 10 years or more. The majority of participants were involved in the Fashion, beauty and wellness, food and catering, and digital services. A majority of participants (82%) reported encountering gender-related challenges during their business ventures, while 18% indicated they had not faced such challenges. Forty percent of participants stated they experienced limited access to financial resources, while another 44% reported facing gender biases and stereotypes. Additionally, 14% mentioned having limited access to information and training opportunities due to their gender. Fifty percent of participants noted some negative impact on their business due to gender-related challenges, with 48% reporting a significant negative impact. In contrast, 7% did not observe any impact. Seventy percent of participants indicated they received no entrepreneurial support for women from local government or organizations, while 30% reported receiving some form of support. Furthermore, 70% of participants stated they had not received any entrepreneurial support for women from local government or organizations.

This study aimed to uncover the gender challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Karachi, and to explore their experiences in overcoming these obstacles. Women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to the business landscape by bringing innovation, diversity, and fresh perspectives, which foster economic growth and development.

These trailblazers serve as role models, inspiring other women to pursue their entrepreneurial ventures and combat social stereotypes. They play a crucial role in community development by investing in businesses and funding various programs, thereby contributing to social change. Additionally, women entrepreneurs connect gender issues to progress by creating empowerment initiatives that benefit future generations. Their focus on social and environmental responsibility leads them to implement sustainable practices and engage in philanthropic efforts. These women are actively working to strengthen economic growth and promote an equitable society that includes diverse populations.

The research identifies specific obstacles that women entrepreneurs in Karachi face, highlighting the need for specialized programs to help them overcome barriers and achieve gender equality in business ownership. It was found that women entrepreneurs in Karachi often experience gender bias and stereotypical treatment [14]. These entrepreneurs encounter various forms of discrimination, including limited access to funding and biased behavior in business interactions. Previous global studies on women entrepreneurs, such as those by Brush and DeTienne, have reported similar findings. Gender-specific stereotypes and confidence suppression hinder the market potential of female business owners, obstructing business growth and limiting their networking and resource acquisition opportunities.

The results of this study also revealed a lack of support networks for women entrepreneurs in Karachi. Most respondents reported receiving no assistance from government entities or organizations, as training programs, mentoring, and networking services were largely unavailable. This outcome aligns with past research indicating that women entrepreneurs require supportive

networks and resources to thrive [15-17]. The findings underscore the urgent need for stakeholders to establish targeted programs involving government and NGO participation, along with industry associations, to create comprehensive support networks for women entrepreneurs. The study emphasizes the prevalence of women entrepreneurs in specific industries, particularly tourism and hospitality. This concentration may be shaped by cultural and societal norms, as well as the economic opportunities available in the region. The findings align with previous research that has examined the impact of gendered occupational segregation on women's entrepreneurship. Promoting diversification across industry sectors and challenging traditional gender roles can help create a more inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This research adds to the growing literature on gender challenges in entrepreneurship and sheds light on the unique experiences of women entrepreneurs in Karachi. It highlights the necessity for multi-dimensional interventions to tackle the challenges identified. These interventions could include policies to combat gender biases, targeted financial support and resource access, training programs tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs, and the establishment of networking platforms and mentorship opportunities. It is essential that these initiatives are developed in collaboration with local stakeholders and informed by the perspectives and experiences of women entrepreneurs themselves [18]. While this study offers valuable insights into the gender challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Karachi, it is important to recognize its limitations. The qualitative nature of the research restricts the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Future research could utilize a mixed-methods approach or quantitative

surveys to validate and expand upon the findings of this study [19].

To summarize, the qualitative exploration of women entrepreneurs' experiences in Karachi, revealed significant gender challenges and barriers that hinder their entrepreneurial journey. By identifying these challenges, this study enhances our understanding of gender dynamics in entrepreneurship and underscores the necessity for targeted support mechanisms. It is crucial for policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders to collaborate in creating an enabling environment that promotes gender equality, empowers women entrepreneurs, and unleashes their full potential as catalysts for economic and social development in Karachi.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women entrepreneurs are a vital force in society, generating substantial positive impacts by empowering women through economic opportunities and financial independence. Their businesses contribute to job creation, reduce unemployment rates, and foster economic growth and development with innovation and fresh perspectives. As role models and sources of inspiration, they encourage other women to challenge gender norms and pursue entrepreneurship. Through their ventures, women entrepreneurs promote community development by reinvesting profits, supporting local initiatives, and driving social impact. They bridge gender gaps, empower future generations, and emphasize social and environmental causes through sustainable practices and philanthropy. To investigate this topic, a survey was conducted with 50 participants using a semi-structured questionnaire that included both objective and subjective questions for a comprehensive understanding. The collected data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21. The findings revealed that the majority of participants were involved in the Fashion,

beauty and wellness, food and catering, and digital services. Alarminglly, 80% of participants reported not receiving any entrepreneurial support from local government or organizations. These results highlight the urgent need for local governing bodies to provide essential support to women entrepreneurs in the Karachi region.

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