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Enabling Factors for Women Entrepreneurs in Education: Case of Private Schools

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Abstract



This research paper explored deep into understanding what factors contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs within the private school sector of Pakistan. A qualitative research approach was employed, focusing on phenomenology, specifically transcendental phenomenology. This allowed the researcher to uncover the factors that enable success through the real-life experiences of the participants. To gather qualitative data, in-depth interviews were conducted with accomplished women entrepreneurs, carefully chosen through purposive sampling to match the study's objective.

From these six in-depth interviews, the researcher discovered ten key factors that play a pivotal role in enabling women's success. These factors cover a range of aspects including the support they receive from family and spouses, their desire for financial independence, their courage to take risks, their educational degree and knowledge, their access to financial support, the influence of socio-cultural support, their need for achievement, self-confidence, high motivation, and their contributions to family income.

The synergy of these diverse factors was found to be crucial in shaping the journey of successful women entrepreneurs in the private schools. Based on these insights, it's suggested that it's time for a reevaluation of government policies related to private schools. These policies should be revamped to create an environment that offers more opportunities for female entrepreneurs. Additionally, targeted awareness sessions for private schools are proposed, shedding light on how women can access quick loans from financial institutions designed to support them. This approach not only equips women entrepreneurs to handle financial challenges but also encourages the growth of their school businesses.

Keywords: Enabling Factor, Women Entrepreneurs, Private Schools

Introduction

The vital role of women entrepreneurs in driving the economic growth of nations has gained widespread recognition (Zaki & Rashid, 2016; Meyer & Synodinos, 2019). These enterprising women, whether individually or in groups, play a crucial part in initiating, organizing, and managing business ventures. A woman is classified as a women entrepreneur when she holds ownership and control over a business, with at least 51% ownership stake and employment opportunities for fellow women constituting at least 51% of the workforce (GEM, 2020). The rise of women as entrepreneurs is facilitated by conditions that empower them to carve their own paths and achieve financial independence.

While the representation of women in entrepreneurship remains relatively low, it's worth noting that women outnumber men in academic pursuits in Pakistan. The country's strategic goal is to increase women's participation in the workforce from 26% to 45%, with support from the World Bank, thus strengthening the nation's economic foundation. One particularly promising sector is the private school industry in Pakistan, which has experienced significant growth. This growth is evident from the increasing number of educational institutions across cities and towns. The establishment of over 36,000 private schools catering to 6.3 million students underscores this expansion. Notably, between 1983 and 2000, the number of private schools in Pakistan's central provinces skyrocketed from over 3,300 to more than 32,000—a nearly tenfold increase (Andrabi, Das & Khawaja, 2002). Given this context, understanding the factors nurturing female entrepreneurs within the private school sector becomes critically important.

It's evident that women show less inclination toward entrepreneurship compared to men, especially in developing nations where entrepreneurship has been traditionally seen as a male-dominated field (Malmstrom, Wincent & Johansson, 2017; Mahtap, Welsh, Caputo, & Pellegrini, 2017b). However, the concept of "female entrepreneurship" is gaining momentum worldwide as more women are driven to embark on entrepreneurial journeys due to improved social and economic status (Paoloni & Serafini, 2018; Pergelova, Manolova, Simeonova-Ganeva, & Yordanova, 2019).

To tap into the potential of women's empowerment, it's crucial for women to nurture and develop their business skills (Wilson, Kickul, Marlino, Barbosa, & Griffiths, 2009). Pakistan, being a developing nation grappling with high youth unemployment and limited job opportunities, highlights the practicality of embracing entrepreneurship (Iftikhar, 2016). Aligned with this perspective, Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of female business ownership among countries (Mahmood, 2011). Globally, 34% of businesses are women-owned, but in Pakistan, this number is just 12%. Looking ahead, Pakistan's working-age population is projected to grow by 2.1% annually due to a high birth rate. However, the gender gap in the job market is expected to persist, with women's participation lagging 57% behind that of men. This context highlights the challenges in Pakistan's job landscape, characterized by high youth unemployment and substantial engagement in informal or low-income work. In response, the Pakistan Update Development Report emphasizes the potential of promoting women's entrepreneurial initiatives to improve women's economic prospects in the country (Gul, Wu & Khan, 2021).

Objective

To explore enabling factors of female entrepreneurs in private schools.

Research Question

What enabling factors contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs in private schools?

The participation of women entrepreneurs has important impacts on both society and the economy. Beyond their personal goals, women entrepreneurs also create job opportunities, contributing to greater inclusivity in society. While their contributions affect both small-scale and large-scale economic aspects, their societal role becomes even more important in situations influenced by different factors that shape women's entrepreneurship. Especially in developing countries, the potential of women's entrepreneurship remains untapped, offering innovation, job creation, and economic growth. In this context, the field of education emerges as a particularly promising sector for women entrepreneurs in Pakistan.

Given this background, the availability of supportive factors becomes a crucial factor in helping women entrepreneurs effectively manage their educational businesses. This study aims to uncover the factors that empower Pakistani women entrepreneurs to navigate the complex landscape of entrepreneurship within the education sector.

Literature Review

Past studies emphasize the importance of including women entrepreneurs in the framework of human resource development. Changes like industrialization, urbanization, social laws, higher education growth, and increased awareness have led to a better understanding of women's abilities, rights, and working conditions. This shift has led to a quick rise in businesses owned by women globally. A woman entrepreneur, defined by Bulsare, Chandwani, and Gandhi (2014), is someone who takes on complex responsibilities to achieve personal goals and financial independence.

Support from family and society is a crucial aspect of the entrepreneurial journey. Social support, including connections with family and friends, helps people, especially women, deal with challenges. Neneh (2020) confirms that these interactions greatly influence individuals' overall goals, helping during tough times and focusing on specific issues. This support is particularly important for women in entrepreneurship, as it helps them face the challenges of their career choices, set goals, and ultimately succeed (Sahban, Ramalu, & Syahputra, 2016).

Research indicates that if given the right resources, women entrepreneurs can use innovative strategies to bring about significant economic progress (Mehtap, Pellegrini et al., 2017b). However, women, especially in Asian countries, face more gender biases and unfair treatment when starting new businesses (Lin, Lu, Hsieh, & Liu, 2018). Gender disparities persist in entrepreneurship, and women encounter unique challenges (Sieger & Minola, 2017). Financing efforts often rely on personal savings, help from family, and occasional bank loans for Asian female entrepreneurs. Having

enough capital is crucial and affects the success of female-led startups (Mehtap, Caputo, & Pellegrini, 2017a).

Adding to the challenges, Asian women often lack entrepreneurial skills and knowledge due to limited entrepreneurship education (Ratten, 2016). Knowing how to start and manage a business is essential, and it impacts women's entrepreneurial aspirations and actions (Wu, Li, & Zhang, 2019). Informal entrepreneurial knowledge, coming from practical experiences, notably influences women's intentions to become entrepreneurs (Hutasuhut, 2018).

The concept of achievement orientation, reflecting how individuals respond to tasks and challenges, sheds light on motivational patterns (Basardien, Friedrich, & Darko, 2016). Built on the social cognitive model, the achievement goal theory suggests that people's motives and objectives in business endeavors predict their motivation and behaviors tied to business success (Obschonka, Fisch, & Boyd, 2017a). Women's entrepreneurship is notably influenced by their views of business operations, responsibilities, and financial outcomes (Saebi, Foss, & Linder, 2019). Multiple studies, including Muralidharan and Pathak (2017), underscore the strong link between achievement orientation and entrepreneurial success, which ultimately shapes women's intentions to become entrepreneurs.

Motivation also plays a key role in achievement orientation, driving entrepreneurs towards their goals and maintaining business values (Uchenna, Sanjo, & Joseph, 2019). While challenges exist in entrepreneurship, creating a supportive environment for female success is crucial, particularly in academia, where many women participate. Exploring enabling factors in educational entrepreneurship, which has fewer cultural barriers, empowers women entrepreneurs, contributing to economic growth and better education quality.

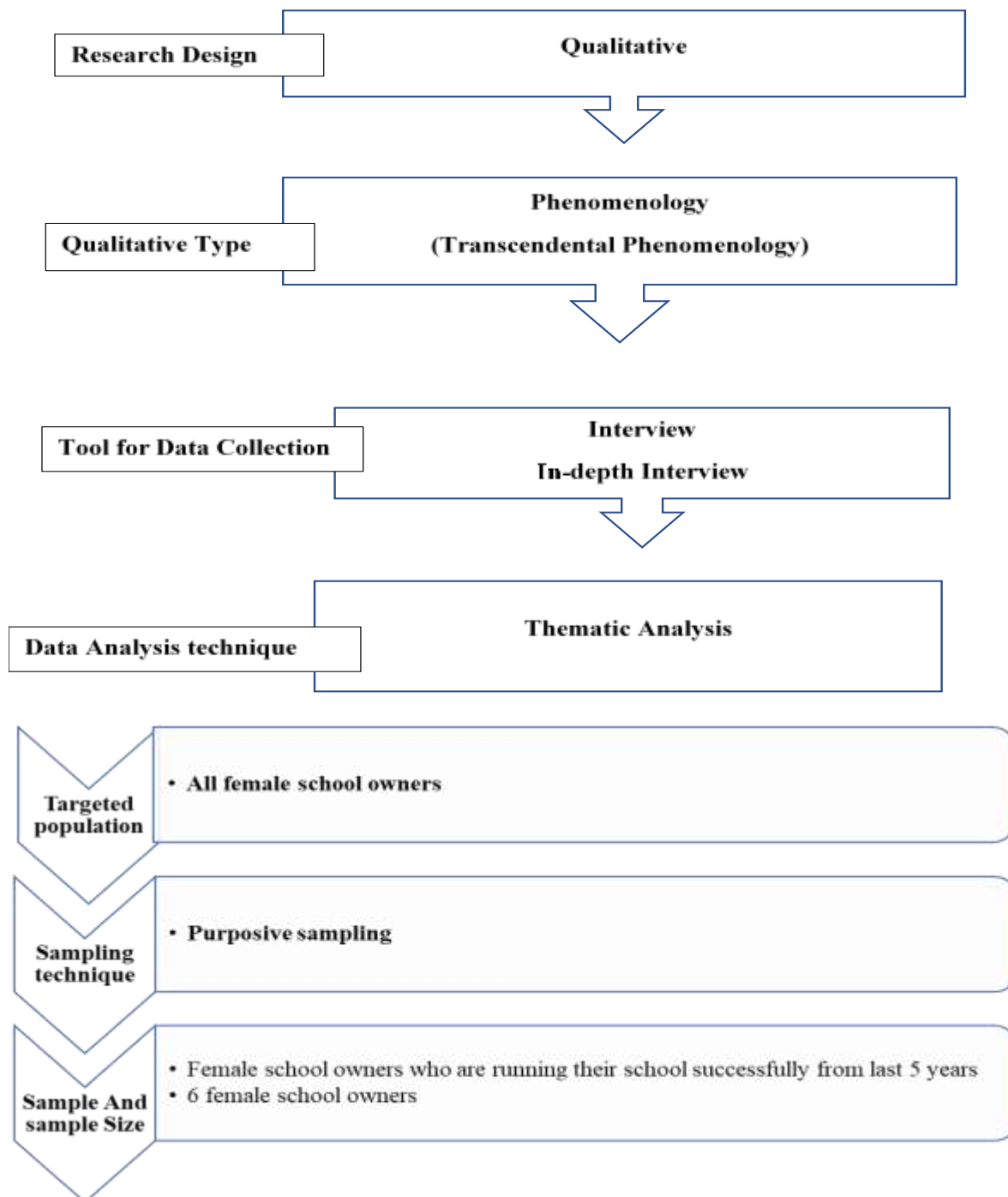
Prior research underscores the importance of incorporating women entrepreneurs into human resource development frameworks due to societal changes. These shifts have led to a rise in female-owned businesses globally. Despite these findings, a research gap exists in understanding the factors that drive success for women entrepreneurs in private schools, where women dominate but enabling factors remain unexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the specific enabling factors for women entrepreneurs in the private school sector.

Methodology

The research methodology of this study is based on qualitative research design, chosen to suit the research's specific objective. The study aimed to investigate various factors, making a qualitative approach the best way to explore textual data thoroughly. The study followed phenomenology, a philosophical approach that looks into participants' lived experiences related to the main subject. To be precise, the study focused on female owners of educational institutions. Due to practical challenges in involving all potential participants, purposive sampling was used to select relevant participants who met certain criteria. The study concentrated on experienced female school owners who had managed their schools for at least five years successfully. The sample size was determined based on the idea of saturation, where data collection continued until no new insights were found. The study involved 6 successful female school owners and used in-depth interviews to collect primary data. These interviews, a qualitative research tool, allowed for detailed exploration of participants' thoughts, experiences, emotions, and viewpoints. The collected interview data were thoroughly recorded for analysis. Thematic analysis, a strong technique, was used to uncover recurring patterns and main themes in participants' perspectives. To ensure unbiased interpretation, the researcher employed bracketing, which means setting aside preconceived notions during analysis. Thematic analysis is a method that systematically organizes and summarizes individual's lived experiences to reveal the deeper meanings within the data. The study followed a six-step framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis:

1. Immersion in the data to get familiar with it.
2. Assigning initial codes to capture the data's essence.
3. Identifying patterns or themes across the coded interviews.
4. Exploring the identified themes more deeply.
5. Clearly identifying and labeling the themes.
6. Thoroughly documenting the findings in the final report.

In summary, the research approach of this study, using phenomenology and thematic analysis, was chosen to deeply explore the factors that impact successful female entrepreneurs in the private school sector.



Findings and Results

The information gathered from in-depth interviews was carefully analyzed using a method called thematic analysis. This analysis followed a structured series of steps to ensure thoroughness. The interviews with women entrepreneurs continued until no new information was found, making sure that a complete understanding of the topic was achieved. Initially, the interviews were done in the local language, Urdu, and later translated into English for analysis. To keep participants' identities private, a coding system using alphanumeric codes like P1 to P6 was used. Through this systematic thematic analysis, the researcher identified key factors that significantly contributed to the success of women entrepreneurs in the private school sector. This methodical approach allowed for a detailed examination and interpretation of participants' stories, revealing a variety of factors that played a role in their achievements as entrepreneurs.

1. Family and Spouse Support

It was explored from the analysis that family and spouse support is the main factor in the entrepreneurial journey of women. As p1 expressed that

“It was impossible for me to become successful without the support of my family and husband. I have to work long hours for my organisation’s success, and sometimes, I cannot give enough time to my home. My family understood my responsibilities and provided their moral support to make me feel happier.”

P5 said that

“My husband was the only support in my entrepreneurial journey. Other people negate my decision of starting my own school and eagerly wait my failure but the support of my husband make me enough strong to be successful entrepreneur”

2. Knowledge and Educational degree

It was explored from the analysis that knowledge and educational degree are essential factors for successful women entrepreneurs in academia. It was stated by P3 that

“I always give credit for my success to my degree and prior knowledge about the school. I work as a teacher and do administrative tasks in school, which gives me enough knowledge about running a school successfully. I did M.ed, in which I read about the learner’s needs, the psychology of children and quality school parameters. These all help me to run my school successfully.”

It was stated by P5 that

“My educational degrees play important role in shaping my journey from aspiring business owner to successful business women in private schools”

3. Financial support

It was explored that financial support can enable women to be successful entrepreneurs in private schools. P3 claimed that

“Availability of finance was the only reason for making my dream (be an entrepreneur) true. I was not in favour of running my organisation on partnership or starting my school by getting a loan.”

P4 claimed that

“My husband provides financial assistance for my school”.

4. Risk taker

It was explored that the risk-taking factor plays a vital role in women entrepreneurs' successful lives. P3 said that

“Taking risks is my innate ability. I love to take the risk. It is just because of this ability I am a successful entrepreneur. It opens a new horizon for my business. In my opinion, every entrepreneur is a risk taker in one or another way; otherwise, she cannot make her business unique and profitable.”

P4 claimed that

“I am always open to take risk to facilitate innovation and creativity with success. My willingness to challenge the status quo by introducing unique values make me strong and successful entrepreneur”

5. Financial independence

It was explored that the wish for financial independence is a significant factor that leads a women entrepreneur to become successful. P4 said that

“I did my teaching job before running my school business. I did my best, but I could not be financially independent”. My urge to become financially independent leads me toward my entrepreneurial journey. We as a woman cannot take our decisions without being financially independent.”

P5 said that

“Financial independence gives me courage and confidence to take decisions independently and own them. It empowers me as a woman entrepreneur”.

6. Socio culture support

It was explored that society and cultural support is an important factor that enable women to be successful entrepreneur in private school sector. P1 claimed that

“In my family females are not allowed to work in any profession other than school. When I decided to open my own school my family and relative supported me a lot. Without the support of my family, I was not able to be successful”

P7 said that

“Female in school sectors always gets more respect and support in my society. This profession is considered to be the best option for any educated woman in my culture”

7. Need for achievement

It was explored that need for achievement is a dominant factor in the success of every women entrepreneur in private school sector.

P3 stated that

” It was my need to be successful in my life. I always want to be my own boss. This need gives me courage to do lot of hard work to be my better version and successful entrepreneur.”

P3 stated that

“My need fuel me and empower me to strive for excellence. I channel my energy to hit my target by fostering innovation and aspiring my team to reach on target”

8. Self-confidence

It was explored that self-confidence is playing vital role as an enabling factor in the entrepreneurial journey of women entrepreneurs in private school sector.

P5 told that

” My secret of success is my confidence on me. I never let me down in any challenging condition. Difficulties give me more strength and make me more confident about myself.”

P2 told that

“I believe on me and my ability of leadership”

9. High motivation

It was explored that high motivation is one of the key enabling factor for women entrepreneur in private school sector.

P1 said that

“I am self-motivated person. I never feel to be motivated by anyone. I do not feel need to wait any outer appreciation to complete my task. I am very energetic, committed, and positive person.”

P5 claimed that

“My motivation to become entrepreneur fuel me to overcome challenges and pursue my goals with determination. Motivation enables me to navigate the complexities of running my school”

10. Contribution to family income

It was explored that contribution in family income is an enabling factor that urge women to be successful entrepreneur.

P2 claimed that

” I belong to a middle-class family. I always saw my parents to compromise on their basic needs to fulfil my needs. I decided to be entrepreneur in my early age because I want to support them financially. Believe me my financial independence impact my family.”

P6 claimed that

“My financial contribution enhances the living standard of my family. It was my driving force behind my profitable business”



Discussion

The study's findings emphasize a range of factors that significantly contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs in the private school sector. These factors include support from family and spouses, the desire for financial independence, willingness to take risks, education and expertise, access to financial resources, socio-cultural influences, achievement motivation, self-confidence, heightened determination, and contributing to family income. These factors are explored in the context of existing research, highlighting their importance and implications for promoting successful women entrepreneurs in this specific field. Scholarly literature highlights the crucial role of family and spousal support in shaping women's entrepreneurial journeys. Open communication with family members, especially spouses, offers insights and encouragement to overcome challenges (Ahmad, 2011). This support not only boosts confidence but also helps sustain enthusiasm for entrepreneurship (Minkus-McKenna, 2009; Noguera, Alvarez, & Urbano, 2013). Education and business acumen are fundamental for women entrepreneurs' success. A lack of domain-specific knowledge can hinder capitalizing on opportunities or managing ventures proficiently (Roy & Das, 2019). Proficiency in business and entrepreneurship relates to self-assurance and the ability to initiate profitable ventures (Hechavarria, Bullough, Brush, & Edelman, 2019). Financial backing enhances confidence and addresses funding challenges (Ahmad, 2011; Minkus, 2009; Noguera, Alvarez, & Urbano, 2013). Risk-taking is a crucial trait empowering woman to navigate complex situations with determination (Fairlie & Holleran, 2012). Financial independence motivates many women entrepreneurs, underscoring its importance (Karen, 2006). Within Pakistan's cultural context, socio-cultural factors play a significant role, augmenting women's presence in private schools and shaping entrepreneurial success (Wube, 2010). The desire for achievement propels women's entrepreneurship, facilitating their success across various domains (Zeffane, 2013). This intrinsic drive empowers women to overcome obstacles and build confidence (Twibell et al., 2008). Elevated motivation is a hallmark of successful women entrepreneurs, driving their achievements (Al Mamun & Ekpe, 2016). Contributing to family income is pivotal in countries like Pakistan, boosting both familial and national economic prospects. The increasing participation of women entrepreneurs, especially in education, reinforces personal and national prosperity. To conclude, these interconnected factors, affirmed by the study, highlight their role in women's entrepreneurial success in private schools. This discussion underscores alignment with existing research and the broader implications for fostering sustainable women's entrepreneurship and economic growth.

Limitation

This study has a few limitations that need to be considered when interpreting its findings. Firstly, the participants included only women entrepreneurs overseeing educational institutions in Lahore. This focus on a specific location might limit how much we can apply the findings to other areas. To gain a better understanding, future research could include a wider range of cities. Secondly, the study focused solely on women entrepreneurs in the private school sector. While this allowed for a detailed investigation, it's important to be cautious when extending the results to other parts of the private education field. Including various types of private educational organizations would give a more comprehensive picture of entrepreneurship in this sector. These limitations highlight the need for further research that includes different locations and a broader range of private educational contexts. By doing so, we can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to women entrepreneurs' success in private schools.

Conclusion

The results highlight how important supportive factors are for women's involvement in owning businesses. Family and partner support, along with a willingness to take risks and achieve financial independence, are key drivers for female entrepreneurs. Education and knowledge also play a significant role in their success, even though these aspects are sometimes overlooked in the business world. Traits like being willing to take risks, having self-confidence, and being highly motivated are common among successful women entrepreneurs. The desire for achievement, along with support from society and the motivation to contribute to family income, further encourage women's pursuit of entrepreneurial success.

These findings also emphasize the challenges women face when becoming entrepreneurs in Pakistan. As more women join the workforce and start their businesses, they are making important contributions to their communities. This positive trend also benefits Pakistan's economy as a whole. It

is also important to address the challenges women entrepreneurs in Pakistan encounter. Government bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) need to play an active role in helping women entrepreneurs overcome these challenges. Creating clear policies that support women's entrepreneurial development is crucial. By combining these efforts, women entrepreneurs can fully realize their potential and make significant contributions to Pakistan's growing economy.

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