

Women Entrepreneurship in Oman- Possibilities and Challenges

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Abstract

Purpose: Generally, when it comes to entrepreneurship in Arab Societies, women don't have the entrepreneurial motivation to execute their ideas employing their entrepreneurial skills (Ashraf, 2002). Also, women entrepreneurship, in general, is characterized by inadequacy of finance and business network for women, and lack of exchange of information among women entrepreneurs. According to Hechavarria et al. (2012), women are more successful in managing social and environmental activities than men are. In fact, it is this that has prompted the current researcher to explore both constraints and the potential of self-employed women in Oman. Additionally, considering the entrepreneurial challenges businesswomen face, the study attempts to provide suggestions and recommendations that will contribute to women entrepreneurship in Oman.

Design/Methodology/Approach: To achieve the objectives, the study intends to use primary data through well-designed, pre-tested survey questionnaires circulated among two sample clusters such as women engaged in businesses and women students. Convenience sampling is used to select the sample elements and the collected data are to be analyzed using correlation, regression, Chi-Square Test and ANOVA.

Findings: The study assumes that the women entrepreneurs in Oman have a positive inclination towards their self-help, family-based business enterprises. Gender restriction is not a significant factor affecting the growth of women entrepreneurs. Fresh university graduates are found to be highly motivated to become entrepreneurs. The study also attempts to provide a practical environment that the Universities and Colleges in Oman can make use of for enriching the budding women entrepreneurs to motivate, support their entrepreneurial pathway. The scope of women's entrepreneurship is not just money-making, but also strengthening women's participation in nation-building. The study identifies the problems faced by women entrepreneurs and attempts to provide solutions that support the schemes envisaged by the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman to uplift women entrepreneurship in the Sultanate. For instance, one of the major hurdles for women in their businesses is the lack of support from male members of the family. So, the study urges that the government or governmental units encourage women entrepreneurs in Oman and provide financial and technical support to make them self-reliant in their businesses. The study will also enrich the existing literature, throwing light on the possibilities of meeting challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Oman.

Research limitations/implications: It is natural that a research study based on primary data may not be free from limitations. The results of the study are based on an analysis of primary data. So, there is a possibility of error in data collection because some respondents may not give true answers to the questions. Time and money are critical factors that will have an impact on arriving at the representative sample size, which imposes restrictions on the study. The research is intended to be undertaken in Oman; hence the findings of the study cannot be generalized to explore other areas.

Practical implications: The study's outcome would have implications on Government policymakers, educational administrators, funding agencies that ensure women empowerment in the country, NGOs, and responsible citizens of Oman. The results of the study would assist the government regulators while drafting policies to incorporate motivational programs for women for promoting their participation in entrepreneurship in the country and the educational administrators

Originality/Value: The study assures originality of data, tools, and techniques for analyzing the data. Therefore, the results are more reliable as they are derived based on women's actual exposure to their businesses over a significant period.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship; business; SMEs; resource utilization; challenges; Oman

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial development through women's participation has been regarded as one of the most suitable ways of attaining sustainable socio-economic development. The subprime financial crisis from 2007 to 2009 and the recent oil price crisis have woken up the policymakers in Oman to realize the importance of sustainable economic growth. Nurturing women's entrepreneurship is one of the crucial phenomena for achieving such growth. Realizing the fact that entrepreneurial education is the most imperative element in the process of cultivating women entrepreneurship, the government of Oman, its various agencies, and NGOs promoting women empowerment try to create an encouraging environment for women in Oman to start their own business enterprises. But, women are not as free as the menfolk as they have to perform multi-tasks at home and cross many hurdles as entrepreneurs to penetrate a completely male-dominated domain.

In order to promote entrepreneurship in the country, the Government of Oman has implemented several initiatives, which include offering bank loans for starting up of small and medium enterprises through Oman Development Bank and providing equity financing, technical assistance, training facilities, educational opportunities, etc. through various projects like *Injaj Oman*, *Intilaaqah*, *Sharakha*, and *Takaful* (Belwal et al., 2014). Cisco Entrepreneur Institute (CEI) in Oman organizes workshops and establishes business links that are highly relevant for establishing businesses in Oman.

Population explosion coupled with an ever-increasing unemployment rate causes serious economic stagnation in the country. Therefore, the government is forced to adopt a strong alternative course of action to deal with the issue at an early stage. Focus on entrepreneurship is the right initiative taken by the Omani Government to promote new ways of self-employment offering technical and financial assistance. Entrepreneurship has been identified as a long-term strategy for economic growth and sustainability (Qiu, 2018), as it helps in creating employment opportunities, develop innovations (Batool and Ullah, 2017), and leads to competitive advantage.

Of late, this recognition has been the pivotal focus in Oman amidst the Oil price crisis and COVID 19 Pandemic. The Government of Oman has started enhancing the social status of women both directly and indirectly. Women in Oman are encouraged to join the workforce and work shoulder

by shoulder with men, unlike in other GCC countries (Goveas and Aslam, 2011); however, the numbers are still lagging behind (Coleman and Robb, 2014). Generally, when it comes to entrepreneurship in Arab Societies, women don't have the entrepreneurial motivation to execute their ideas employing their entrepreneurial skills (Ashraf, 2002). Policymakers in Oman have started transforming the social discrimination against women into possibilities for their entrepreneurship endeavors. An encouraging and conducive environment is ensured for women by the policymakers through 'Vision 2020', whereby women can implement and practice their entrepreneurial ideas and skills.

Private firms in Oman joins hands with the Government of Oman in empowering women entrepreneurs. For instance, Ooredoo- an Omani telecommunications company- has launched a *women's incubator program* in 2015, guiding female entrepreneurs to use digital technology for their sustainability in the long run. Another notable private sector contribution for strengthening female entrepreneurs in Oman, is the *Mulhimat* -A reestablished venture between Tawasul Global Connection Centre and an oil and gas exploration and production company- BP Oman- in the Middle East. Women entrepreneurs in Oman, especially during the pandemic period are attracting various kinds of supports from the government and private sectors in order to sustain and improve their ventures. The Omani Government has also initiated a program called SANAD (Self-Employment and National Autonomous Development) to educate young unemployed Omani nationals to realize the importance of entrepreneurship in the country and encourage them to start small and medium businesses.

In spite of these initiatives, women entrepreneurs in Oman are still to contribute towards employment opportunities, incubating new entrepreneurs, etc. One of the major issues that restrict their scope is the lack of formal educational programs which would offer customized training to enhance the scope of expanding and diversifying their businesses, thereby contributing to nation building. Thus, higher educational institutions/training centers in Oman have to focus on developing such entrepreneurial programs that make aspiring new graduates successful in their entrepreneurial venture. The development of women entrepreneurship in Oman has not been encouraging. The available literature documents several reasons for the slow pace of growth of women entrepreneurship not only in Oman but also across different nations.

In order to provide the policy makers in Oman with an insight into the possibilities and challenges that female entrepreneurs face in their businesses, the study has been carried out. The purpose of the research work is to assess women's aspirations as well as their problems as entrepreneurs to assist policymakers in Oman to strengthen the performance of women entrepreneurs to contribute to nation-building. Accordingly, the present research explores the socio-economic possibilities and the challenges the female entrepreneurs face in establishing and nurturing small and medium enterprises in Oman.

2. Review of Literature

Several studies have been conducted on the performance of women entrepreneurs worldwide. A review of those studies is discussed. However, it is essential to indicate that women entrepreneurs have been defined differently (Martin and Osberg, 2007; Lee-Gosselin and Grise, 2009), and therefore within the scope of this paper, women entrepreneur is defined as *women who initiate, organize and operate business enterprises* (Belwal et al., 2014:36). Vatharkar (2012) examined the problems faced by women entrepreneurs in India, and it has been found that they face difficulties in starting up new businesses or running their current ones. Some of the listed

challenges are work-life imbalance, gender discrimination, and lack of motivation, financial support, and knowledge of government policies, regulations, and rules and their updates, which discourage women from taking up initiatives to become entrepreneurs.

Gender difference has been one of the important factors affecting women in starting their own business. Evald (2012) has observed that physically and psychologically challenged women are less capable of becoming entrepreneurs. Several studies lend support to this view (Ding et al., 2006; Fuentes-Fuentes et al., 2012; McMillan, 2009; Murray and Graham, 2007; Rosa and Dawson, 2006). However, James (2012) believes in the need to explore the possibilities and success of women entrepreneurship by concentrating on the difference between the male and female entrepreneurs concerning the effectiveness of the management of businesses and the obstacles faced. This gender-wise comparison is not correct, for this connotation tries to document that women are less capable of managing their businesses than men are. This apart, there is a lack of professional network for women that hinders the growth of women entrepreneurship (Salma M. Al Lamki, 1999). Langowitz and Minniti (2007) have found that marketability is a challenging task that restricts the floating of new businesses by women because of which many sound business propositions do not progress beyond the idea.

Donnel and Anderson (1978) have found that women entrepreneurs who prefer to get engaged in male-oriented businesses find the business more prestigious and socially recognizable. Sexten and Kent (1982) have argued that women who are well educated would prefer to set up some business rather than a family. According to Huntley (1985), women venture into entrepreneurship because of their desire to be independent. He has also found that the success of a woman in her business is dependent on her self-confidence, and willingness to learn and explore new possibilities. Tian and Bird (1989) reveal that the past experience of women entrepreneurs leads to work satisfaction and increases productivity. So, the success of a businesswoman largely depends on her past work experience.

When it comes to gender influence, women in female-oriented businesses can encourage other women to get into entrepreneurship more than those in male-oriented business models do (Fagensor and Marcus, 1991). Women entrepreneurs would like to establish a professional relationship with the opposite gender at the initial stage of their entrepreneurship. They shift their focus to the female gender once they succeed in their business ventures. Thus, women entrepreneurs who are mature tend to motivate other women to venture into entrepreneurship (Cromie and Birely, 1992).

Dolinski et al. (1993), have analyzed the growth of women entrepreneurship, reveal that the level of education plays an important role in the success rate of women in their business endeavors. The higher the educational level of women, the better the success rate. Hisrich and Fuldop (1993) have established that women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in enterprise creation in Hungary. Successful women leaders have a unique perception of a long-term vision of their business than their male counterparts do, according to Brush and Bird (1996).

Good and Mielnicki (1996), have examined the financial strength of women-owned business firms in the US, find that women entrepreneurs are not as strong as male businessmen in terms of financial growth and stability. Hisrich et al. (1996) have found that women are more dedicated to their businesses than men are. According to them, the women's average score of egoistic variables is less than men's. In terms of the average score of entrepreneurial variables such as motivation, positive thinking, utilization of opportunities, creativity, promptness, smart work, and

proactiveness women are better than men. So, women entrepreneurs perceive their business more positively than their men counterparts do.

Alvarez and Meyer (1998) have identified that women do not start their businesses for want of any other vocation to survive. They venture into their business possibilities because they would like to use their skills and competencies to become successful. So, the competitive advantage of their skills and competencies is the primary reason for their interest in self-employment. However, they should have more training opportunities to keep them updated. Glas and Pertin (1998) have found that women are more successful in service-oriented businesses. The size of the firms they own is smaller than that of the enterprises that men do. Women enterprises export less than the businesses owned by men do. They also find that women tend to start a business after gaining experience in the relevant field. This shows that women are more risk-averse than men counterparts are.

Seth (1988) states that women entrepreneurs possess better cognitive skills than non-entrepreneurial women do. Mohiuddin (1983) has found that women decide to venture into their businesses to meet their financial needs. However, there are studies that give contradictory results about the factors influencing women entrepreneurs. Singh and Sengupta (1984) have argued that the level of education and experience, and family circumstances do not influence the success of women entrepreneurs. Singh et al. (1993), have examined the problems encountered by women entrepreneurs in India, reveal that businesswomen have to face the problems of managing workers, marketing issues, recovery of dues, the flexibility of business operations, and mobility. They also reveal that women find it difficult to manage the conflict between family roles and entrepreneurial roles.

Singal and Kamala (1989) have identified that women entrepreneurs located in rural areas encounter more operational issues like transportation, logistics, communication, operational costs, etc. Rao (1991) also states that rural businesswomen need more training opportunities and marketing skills than urban counterparts do. Phani and Baruah (1992) find that there had been no initiative from the government to support women entrepreneurship in India till the 1980s.

Schwartz (1976) has concluded in his study that the most important barrier for women in their businesses is the lack of financial assistance, training, and knowledge in their businesses and forecasting skills. According to Kaus (1992), women are not able to expand their business operations due to a lack of exposure. He differs from other findings that poverty is not a demotivating factor for women starting up a business. However, lack of training and exposure to the risk in the business is the most influential factor demoting women in their business endeavors. According to Darchinder and Prashar (1993), women entrepreneurs encounter problems like marketing issues, financial constraints, family commitments, and lack of confidence, self-motivation, and support from male members of the family, etc. Sethi (1994) has revealed that most businesswomen have financial constraints as they do not avail themselves of external funds in the form of venture capital, loans from financial institutions, etc. Family responsibilities are found to be one of the barriers to expanding their business operations.

Other challenges facing women entrepreneurs in starting entrepreneurial ventures are lack of knowledge, networking, training and experience, work commitment, and working capital (Rey-Mart et al., 2015; Mathew, 2010; Pardo-del-Val, 2010; Ganesan et al., 2002). While in Saudi Arabia, finding market data, securing capital, recruiting suitable personnel and bureaucracy are the most identified challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Ahmed, 2011), in Bahrain, the challenges are lack of self-confidence, governmental support, market data, and monopoly of the investment market (Said and Al Ghazali, 2012).

The conflict between family role and entrepreneurial role, financial constraints, and lack of awareness of self-employment opportunities are the crucial problems faced by women entrepreneurs. (Kumbhar, 2013). Mauchiin et al. (2014) have revealed that managerial skills, financial limitations, and access to raw materials are the main constraints of women entrepreneurs. According to Bilal and Al Mqbali (2015), lack of managerial abilities and marketing skills and financial constraints are significant barriers for women entrepreneurs.

3. Significance of the Study

Considering the entrepreneurial challenges facing women in business, there is a need to undertake a research study for exploring the possibilities and challenges before women entrepreneurs in order to provide suggestions for motivating them to contribute to nation-building through entrepreneurship. When it comes to entrepreneurship in Arab Societies, women generally lack entrepreneurial motivation to execute their ideas employing their entrepreneurial skills (Ashraf, 2002). Women entrepreneurship, in general, is characterized by a lack of finance, a business network for women, motivation, and exchange of information among women entrepreneurs. According to Hechavarria et al. (2012), women are more successful in managing social and environmental activities than men are. This has motivated the current research which explores the possibilities for women and their inclination towards self-employment in Oman. The present study, which differs from the previous ones in terms of the nature and types of samples, nature of data, and analytical tools used, has been undertaken to seek solutions to questions like “Do women in Oman really utilize the resources provided by the country in starting their business?” “What are the factors influencing graduate women to start their own business ventures?” “What are the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in running their businesses?” “Are businesswomen empowered in Oman?” With a view to answering these research questions, the study was conducted with the following objectives in mind:

- a. *To identify factors influencing women to start their own businesses.*
- b. *To analyze the problems encountered by women entrepreneurs in Oman.*
- c. *To measure women empowerment*

4. Methodology

The study made use of the collection of primary data through well-designed, pre-tested online survey questionnaires circulated among two sample clusters such as women engaged in businesses and women students. Survey questionnaires were identified as the best method to serve the purpose of the study objectives as it represents the quickest and efficient method of collecting data from a large number of a participant in less time, and additionally, it offers higher levels of objectivity than other methods. Online survey through google forms is a more reliable way of collecting responses. Respondents can answer at their convenient time and they can start answering the survey questions and can return later to the questions which they had left earlier. Thus, a better response rate can be achieved, which makes the data more reliable. According to Hogg (2003), respondents are not annoyed by approaching them at their inconvenient time, as an online survey provides them with convenience for themselves. Further, researchers can reduce the burden of administering the questionnaire and time in arranging and analyzing the data. (Wilson and Laskey, 2003).

4.1. Sampling and Data Collection: The study has made use of primary data to evaluate the performance of women entrepreneurs in Oman. A sample of 109 women entrepreneurs was chosen using a convenience sampling method. Since respondents are scattered across the whole country, the sample represents the entire population. The required data were collected by questionnaires sent through google forms. Accordingly, the data cover the experience of women entrepreneurs and their performance in business based on personal, social, and economic factors that motivate them, their problems, and the available opportunities. A pilot study was conducted to examine the feasibility of collecting the required data by testing if the questionnaire was clear and intelligible to the respondents and whether the sequence of the questions was appropriate for avoiding ambiguous and biased responses. The study has been conducted using the primary data collected using a well-designed and pre-tested survey questionnaire which contains two parts of the survey. The first part is for examining the obstacles in starting up new projects by women in Oman. The second is for identifying problems women entrepreneurs face in running their businesses. Two sample clusters are identified, such as i) women engaged in businesses and ii) women students. The strata are carefully chosen to serve the objectives of the study. Convenience sampling is used to select the sample elements.

4.2. The framework of Analysis: The first objective is to identify the motivating factors which influence women to start their businesses. These factors are grouped into four categories, viz personal, social, economic, and psychological factors. Some of these factors are quantifiable, so they are directly measured. Some qualitative factors such as personal motivational factors, social constraints, etc. are to be quantified and analyzed. The responses gathered on a five-point scale are given scores and mean values are calculated. The factors are ranked based on mean scores. In some cases, the ranking is given by the respondents. The ranking is the most appropriate technique for identifying the most influential factors of women entrepreneurship.

The second objective is to analyze the problems encountered by women entrepreneurs in Oman. Based on the literature review, factors such as marketing challenges, financial constraints, family circumstances, conflict of roles, educational background, poverty, exposure to the business world, personal capabilities, male domination, Government support, lack of training, location of the business, risk-taking ability and self-motivation are analyzed. Garrett Ranking technique is employed to find the prominent problems faced by entrepreneurs. The third objective is to measure women's empowerment. Literature review suggests that women empowerment is influenced by self-confidence (Thomas et al., 1990), decision-making abilities, inclination towards implementing innovative ideas, positive thinking, availability of information for decision-making, family backup, and social value (Wilkinson, 1998). Since these variables are varied subjective responses have been collected and the mean score and standard deviations are analyzed to understand the degree of women empowerment.

5. Findings and Discussion

Factors influencing Women Entrepreneurship: Factors influencing female entrepreneurship in Oman are classified into (a) Prominent skill sets, (b) reasons to become entrepreneurs (c) Motivational Factors, and (d) Enabling Factors. Weighted Average Rank Test and Garrett's Ranking Technique are employed to identify the most influential factors. The results are summarized and presented in tables 1 – 4. **Prominent Skill Sets:** The result of Weighted Average Rank to identify the most influential factors under Prominent Skill Sets discloses that marketing

skills motivate an individual to choose or prefer entrepreneurship followed by technical skills, financial and networking skills, and learning managerial and motivation techniques.

Table 1: Prominent Skill sets – Weighted Average Rank Test

Particular	VH	H	M	L	VL	Total	Mean Score	Mean	Rank
Technical Skills	29	32	23	6	19	109	373	3.42	2
	145	128	69	12	19				
Marketing Skills	30	36	21	2	20	109	381	3.50	1
	150	144	63	4	20				
Financial Skills	31	28	24	4	22	109	369	3.39	3
	155	112	72	8	22				
Networking Skills	34	21	29	4	21	109	370	3.39	3
	170	84	87	8	21				
Learning Managerial & Motivational Techniques	25	35	24	5	20	109	367	3.37	4
	125	140	72	10	20				

Table 2: Reasons to become Entrepreneurs - Garrett's Ranking Technique

Particulars	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
	77	63	54	45	36	23				
To Earn Money	72	16	8	4	5	4	109	7436	68.22	1
	5544	1008	432	180	180	92				
Gain Independent Status	16	50	26	4	8	5	109	6369	58.43	2
	1232	3150	1404	180	288	115				
Gain Social Status	3	18	44	21	10	13	109	5345	49.04	4
	231	1134	2376	945	360	299				
Quality of Life	9	16	16	51	11	6	109	5394	49.49	3
	693	1008	864	2295	396	138				
Generate Employment	1	7	7	14	48	32	109	3990	36.61	5
	77	441	378	630	1728	736				
To have an Occupation	8	2	8	15	27	49	109	3948	36.22	6
	616	126	432	675	972	1127				

Reasons to become Entrepreneurs: The results show that a majority of the individuals have chosen entrepreneurship to earn money, followed by gaining independent status, improving their quality of life, etc.

Motivating Factors: From the analysis, it is inferred that unemployment of self or family members motivates women to become entrepreneurs followed by diversification of economic interest, to make use of idle funds, and the like.

Enabling Factors: Success stories of entrepreneurs motivates individuals to prefer entrepreneurship followed by technical and professional skills, family support, etc.

Table 3: Motivating Factors – Garrett’s Ranking Technique

Particulars	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
	77	63	54	45	36	23				
Unemployment of self/family member	44	17	13	18	8	9	109	6466	59.32	1
	3388	1071	702	81	288	207				
Diversification of economic interest	20	42	24	10	12	1	109	6387	58.60	2
	1540	2646	129	45	432	23				
Making use of idle funds	10	22	43	22	9	3	109	5861	53.77	3
	770	1386	232	99	324	69				
Excess free time	17	18	21	39	8	6	109	5758	52.83	4
	1309	1134	113	17	288	138				
Death of father/spouse	6	8	1	10	33	51	109	3831	35.15	6
	462	504	54	45	118	117				
No other means of livelihood	12	2	7	10	39	39	109	4179	38.34	5
	924	126	378	45	140	897				
				0	4					

The results show that the majority of women enter businesses for earning money, followed by gaining independent status, and improving quality of life, gaining social status, and having an occupation. This is supported by Padaki (1994), Harper and Vyakarnam (1998), Dhamaja (2004). However, Collins and Moore (2001) argue that women are less concerned with the motive of making money.

Problems Encountered by Women Entrepreneurs: Garrett Ranking technique is employed to find the prominent problems faced by entrepreneurs. Under the Garrett’s ranking technique, the percentage position is calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage Position} = 100 (R_{ij} - 0.5) / N_j$$

Where R_{ij} = Rank given for i^{th} variable by the j^{th} entrepreneurs.
 N_j = Number of variables ranked by the entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurs were asked to rank the thirteen questions relating to major problems faced by entrepreneurs. The percent position is converted into scores. Then, for each factor, the scores of each entrepreneur are added, and the mean value is calculated. The factors having the highest mean value are the most important. Scale values as per Garrett ranking technique for first to thirteen ranks are: 84,73,67,62,57,53,50,46,42,37,32,26, and 15 respectively. The percentage position of each rank is made into a score by referring factors and summed up for assigning rank. Table 5 exhibits the major hurdles faced by entrepreneurs. The result of Garrett ranking technique discloses that financial constraint is the major problem faced by entrepreneurs, followed by lack of self-motivation, educational background, family circumstances, etc.

Table 4: Enabling Factors

Particulars	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
		78	65	57	50	42	34				
Success Stories	49	18	8	14	14	4	2	109	6914	63.43	1
	3822	1170	456	700	588	136	42				
Technical & professional skills	18	37	23	15	7	8	1	109	6457	59.24	2
	1404	2405	1311	750	294	272	21				
Availability of Skilled People	11	20	45	16	7	6	4	109	6105	56.01	4
	858	1300	2565	800	294	204	84				
Family Support	17	24	16	33	9	8	2	109	6140	56.33	3
	1326	1560	912	1650	378	272	42				
Participation in EDP	0	0	3	8	40	23	35	109	3768	34.57	7
	0	0	171	400	1680	782	735				
Availability of expert advice/consultancy	4	3	5	11	17	48	21	109	4129	37.88	6
	312	195	285	550	714	1632	441				
Availability of incentives	10	7	9	12	15	12	44	109	4310	39.54	5
	780	455	513	600	630	408	924				

The above analysis reveal that the financial constraint is the crucial challenge, followed by lack of self-motivation, educational background, family issues, marketing challenges, exposure to the business environment, and lack of risk-taking skills. The results are in line with Schwartz (1976), Sethi (1994), and Malika Das (1999). According to Magd & McCoy (2014), the government of Oman should identify low-interest financial aids for women entrepreneurs to fund their expansion requirements. However, Patel (1986) argues that the success of women entrepreneurs largely depends on personal competencies and skills, not on training opportunities, favorable location, poverty, etc.

Measuring Women Empowerment: There are factors that influence women empowerment such as Self-confidence, Decision-making ability, Inclination towards implementing innovative ideas, Positive Thinking, Availability of information for decision-making, Family backup, and Social Value. These qualitative characteristics are measured before and after entrepreneurship status. Paired ‘t’ test was employed to measure the empowerment of women after entering their venture, compared to their empowerment before they started their self-employment. The paired “t” Test results reveal that the female business owners have been empowered after their entrepreneurship status, as the difference between empowerment status between pre and post-ownership is statistically significant.

Table 5: Problems Encountered by Women Entrepreneurs

Particulars	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
	84	73	67	62	57	53	50	46	42	37	32	26	15				
Marketing Challenges	19	14	13	8	5	4	9	11	2	3	4	8	9	109	6104	56.00	5
	1596	1022	871	496	285	212	450	506	84	111	128	208	135				
Financial Constraints	32	25	12	9	8	7	3	5	4	1	2	1	0	109	7377	67.68	1
	2688	1825	804	558	456	371	150	230	168	37	64	26	0				
Family Circumstances	20	13	18	8	11	2	3	11	11	5	4	2	1	109	6562	60.20	4
	1680	949	1206	496	627	106	150	506	462	185	128	52	15				
Educational Background	29	12	9	13	8	8	5	3	4	5	3	2	8	109	6610	60.64	3
	2436	876	603	806	456	424	250	138	168	185	96	52	120				
Poverty	4	3	4	5	6	9	8	3	3	4	13	25	22	109	4160	38.17	13
	336	219	268	310	342	477	400	138	126	148	416	650	330				
Exposure to Business World	14	10	12	5	3	10	12	10	8	9	9	6	1	109	5909	54.21	6
	1176	730	804	310	171	530	600	460	336	333	288	156	15				
Personal Capabilities	7	8	6	5	4	9	8	10	12	5	6	7	22	109	4842	44.42	11
	588	584	402	310	228	477	400	460	504	185	192	182	330				
Male Domination	10	9	8	5	4	3	6	7	10	15	14	10	8	109	5155	47.29	8
	840	657	536	310	228	159	300	322	420	555	448	260	120				
Lack of Government Support	5	4	6	7	8	6	8	9	9	10	3	14	20	109	4644	42.61	12
	420	292	402	434	456	318	400	414	378	370	96	364	300				
Lack of Training	9	10	8	9	7	2	3	8	9	5	13	14	12	109	5126	47.03	9
	756	730	536	558	399	106	150	368	378	185	416	364	180				
Location of Business	8	9	6	7	4	2	2	6	10	12	13	14	16	109	4759	43.66	10
	672	657	402	434	228	106	100	276	420	444	416	364	240				
Lack of Ability to take risk	12	11	9	8	6	3	5	6	8	9	12	5	15	109	5345	49.04	7
	1008	803	603	496	342	159	250	276	336	333	384	130	225				
Lack of Self motivation	30	24	10	5	8	9	2	9	8	1	1	1	1	109	7145	65.55	2
	2520	1752	670	310	456	477	100	414	336	37	32	26	15				

6. Summary and Conclusions

About the factors influencing women entrepreneurs to venture into their businesses, the study finds that among the prominent skill sets, marketing skills come first, followed by technical skills, financial skills, and networking skills, and managerial and motivational skills. Further, Garrett's Ranking Technique adds that the majority of women enter businesses for earning money, followed by gaining independent status, and improving quality of life, gaining social status, and having an occupation. Under motivational forces, unemployment of self or family members is the most influential factor for women for getting into self-employment. Women consider success stories of other women entrepreneurs come first, followed by technical and professional skills, family support, availability of skilled workforce, availability of incentives and consultancy services, and participation in employee development training under enabling factors.

Analyzing the problems encountered by women entrepreneurs in Oman, the study reveals that financial constraint is the crucial challenge, followed by lack of self-motivation, educational background, family issues, marketing challenges, exposure to the business environment, and lack of risk-taking skills. The study suggests that the government of Oman should provide interest-free loan facility/loan weiver to women entrepreneurs to promote their businesses. The study supports the policymakers in Oman by suggesting that the success of women entrepreneurs largely depends on personal competencies and skills, training opportunities, favorable location, favourable financial assistance. Examination of women empowerment reveals a significant difference in the empowerment factors before and after the women entrepreneurship status. So, entrepreneurship has led to the empowerment of women in Oman.

7. References

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