

Chapter 10

Work–Family Balance From Women Technopreneurs’ Perspectives: A Qualitative Enquiry

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the lived experience of women technopreneurs in India and to identify challenges and opportunities that they face in the process of balancing work and family life. Establishing technological enterprise as women in the Indian context where they face caste, cultural, and organizational constraints is still a challenge for many. The study is exploratory in nature. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 women technopreneurs selected through snowball sampling method. A thematic analysis of the interview data generated five themes including gender identity, multiple role responsibilities, work challenges, striking a balance, being a role model. Based on the findings, the authors provide implications for research and practice.

INTRODUCTION

Technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship are all subjects of current interest - for both theorists and practitioners. The study of entrepreneurship is gaining traction, as a result of the recognition that increases local capabilities to bring economic growth and help to develop the market economy (Weeks & Seiler, 2001). There are evidences that promoting entrepreneurial activity, particularly women’s entrepreneurial activity is related to economic growth (Kevane & Wydick, 2001). Women have significantly contributed in economic activities in the form of farming, rearing cattle, livestock, etc. However, their contribution was never recognized by the mainstream, until Karl Marx acknowledged their contribution as unpaid work that needed to be valued in economic terms (Hartmann, 1981). Today, women are actively engaged in

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science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to build products, innovative services and to create economic value for individuals and society. Around 274 million women are already running their own businesses across 74 economies, of which 111 million were running well-established businesses by 2016 (Kelley, Singer, & Herrington, 2017). Although women entrepreneurs are more engaged in lifestyle and survival ventures (Neumeyer, Santos, Caetano & Kalbfleisch, 2018) their contribution is increasing in technology led ventures (Brush, Edelman, Manolova, & Welter, 2018). This is an encouraging trend and promises a bright future for women entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs, as organizers of the factors of production, have been recognized all over the world. However, scholars of South Asia have tended to ignore it. The tendency has been to stress the sociological factors such as caste or religion for the backwardness of gender. Women in South Asia keep on facing social, monetary, and legal challenges to their capacity to start the enterprises. This is reflected in the way that South Asian women claim under 10 percent of small and medium enterprises. Furthermore, the United Nations reports that 80 percent of working women in the region are in vulnerable businesses. The percentage of women in technology led entrepreneurship is still very small and has its challenges embedded into the social system of the society, particularly for India.

With an increasing number of women led technology enterprises, this paper tries to understand what role this phenomenon is playing into facilitating gender roles and responsibilities. Does the socio-cultural context of women, particularly in South Asian countries, creates barrier to enter into technology led sector given that culture, caste, religion and gender are so significant in Indian society or leading high-tech ventures is gender neutral. The article also delves into the question how women entrepreneurs in technology, despite being engaged in work round the clock, tries to create work-family balance.

BACKGROUND

Women Entrepreneurs in India

As per Census 2011, India has 48.53% female population out of which almost 420 million women are between 15 and 64 years of age. Despite high literacy ratio of 62.84%, only 15.4 million female enroll for higher education (All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), 2015) and only 0.6 million girls enroll in diploma courses. Further, only 14% of business establishments in the country are being run by female entrepreneurs (Kumar, Jain, Nandraj, & Furtado, K, 2015). This means, out of the 58.5 million functional businesses in India, only 8.05 million have female owner and most of these companies are small-scale and about 79% of them are self-financed (Kumar, Jain, Nandraj & Furtado, 2015). Unequal inheritance rights for women, the work restrictions and limited access to startup capital and collateral are cited as one of the main hindrance in the survey (Kumar, Jain, Nandraj, & Furtado, 2015). Data also indicate a north-south divide as about 1.08 million of the female-headed companies have their base in Tamil Nadu, followed by Kerala with 0.91 million and Andhra Pradesh with 0.56 million. A major reason for this could be the favorable sex ratio pattern visible across most of the Southern India states.

The poor condition of rural women is considered as the reason behind low entrepreneurial activity in India however the general clarification for the low entrepreneurial activity is still unknown. Or maybe, the low rate of women business enterprise in India is a consequence of two phenomenon, to be specific the place of women in Indian culture and the environment for entrepreneurial activity in the country. This blended embeddedness of women enterprise grasps distinctive basic and organization factors and

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