

A Study on the Development of Women Entrepreneurship in Sonitpur District of Assam and the Role of Government

¹Mala Mahanta and ²Dr. Parbin Sultana

¹Research Scholar, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), India

²Research Guide, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), India

ABSTRACT

The twenty-first century is an entrepreneurial age, which is likely to set the stepping stone for the upcoming generations and centuries for entrepreneurs. At present, it is regarded as the engine of economic growth. Considering the advent of new technologies and products, the scope of entrepreneurship seems to have a permanent trigger for growth like the lifeblood of an economy. This paper attempts to sketch the motivating factors for becoming entrepreneurs and problems which hinder the women in transforming their standard of life in Sonitpur district of Assam. It also studies the role of government in the development of entrepreneurship among women. Sonitpur District is situated in the north bank of Brahmaputra river, Assam, India and the economy of this district is primarily agriculture based.

Key words: *Entrepreneurial age, upcoming generation, technologies, products, transforming*

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, a revolution is being driven and led by the entrepreneurs in transforming and renewing economies. In India, women have made a comparatively late foray in the genre of entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, women entrepreneurship, in a formalized sense, is a relatively new phenomenon. In India, women make up to half the population (48.2 percent, 2011) that is available for economic activities in all the sectors of the economy. If this half population is not developed, and is deprived of the opportunities in the agricultural, industrial and tertiary sector, the development cannot take place.

In Assam, entrepreneurship development was poor at the time of independence. Though Assam is full of natural and precious resources, presently Assam is amongst the industrially backward states of India. The industrial scenario of Assam is confined within the growth of employment orientated SSIs sector comprising of the processing and manufacturing units. In Assam, the handloom sector is almost handled by women entrepreneurs. According to the 2011 census, in Assam, more than 86 percent of the total women population are residing in rural areas. The contribution of such huge women population in entrepreneurial activities is nearly not visible. This scenario is detrimental in the development of the state and at the same time, it is against the spirit of inclusive growth. According to the Sixth SSI Economic Census, the total number of women entrepreneurs in India was 8.05 million (13.76%). The SSI units owned by women are 11752, and the total percentage is 1.11 percent in Assam. The success story of Kanaklata Mohila Cooperative Urban Bank, Jorhat is a bright example of women entrepreneurship in Assam (Economic Survey, Assam 2001-02).

Sonitpur district is basically agriculture based. Due to absence of big industries, entrepreneurship development is very slow. Though recently there has been considerable development in women entrepreneurs in the study areas, however, the field of women entrepreneurship is full of problems. The present study is relevant in the context of Micro and Small entrepreneurs in whose actual importance in Sonitpur district is yet to be assessed. It is a backward region characterized by agrarian economy and about 80 percent of total population (Census-2011) is dependent on agricultural sector. During field study, it was noticed that there has been a gradual increase in the participation of women in small business indicating the immense potential for entrepreneurial development. No doubt the range of women entrepreneurs has been increasing but due to untapped entrepreneurial capacity of women in the study area, having resources and potentials, the Sonitpur district is not growing with the pace of main stream line. The field of women entrepreneurship is full of problems. Therefore, a thorough and detailed study of the many facets of entrepreneurship among women is preferred.

1.1. Objectives:

It is aimed to address the following objectives through this study

1. To study the factors which influence the women to become entrepreneurs in the study area
2. To analyze the problems faced by the women entrepreneurs
3. To study the role of Government for the development of women entrepreneurship

1.2. Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses are formulated on the basis of the above objectives.

H₀₁: The level of education has no significant effect on the growth of income of women entrepreneurs of the study area.

H₀₂: Location of business has no significant impact on the growth of women entrepreneurs of the study area

H₀₃: The measures taken by the Government are not sufficient for the sustainable growth in income of women entrepreneurs in the study area.

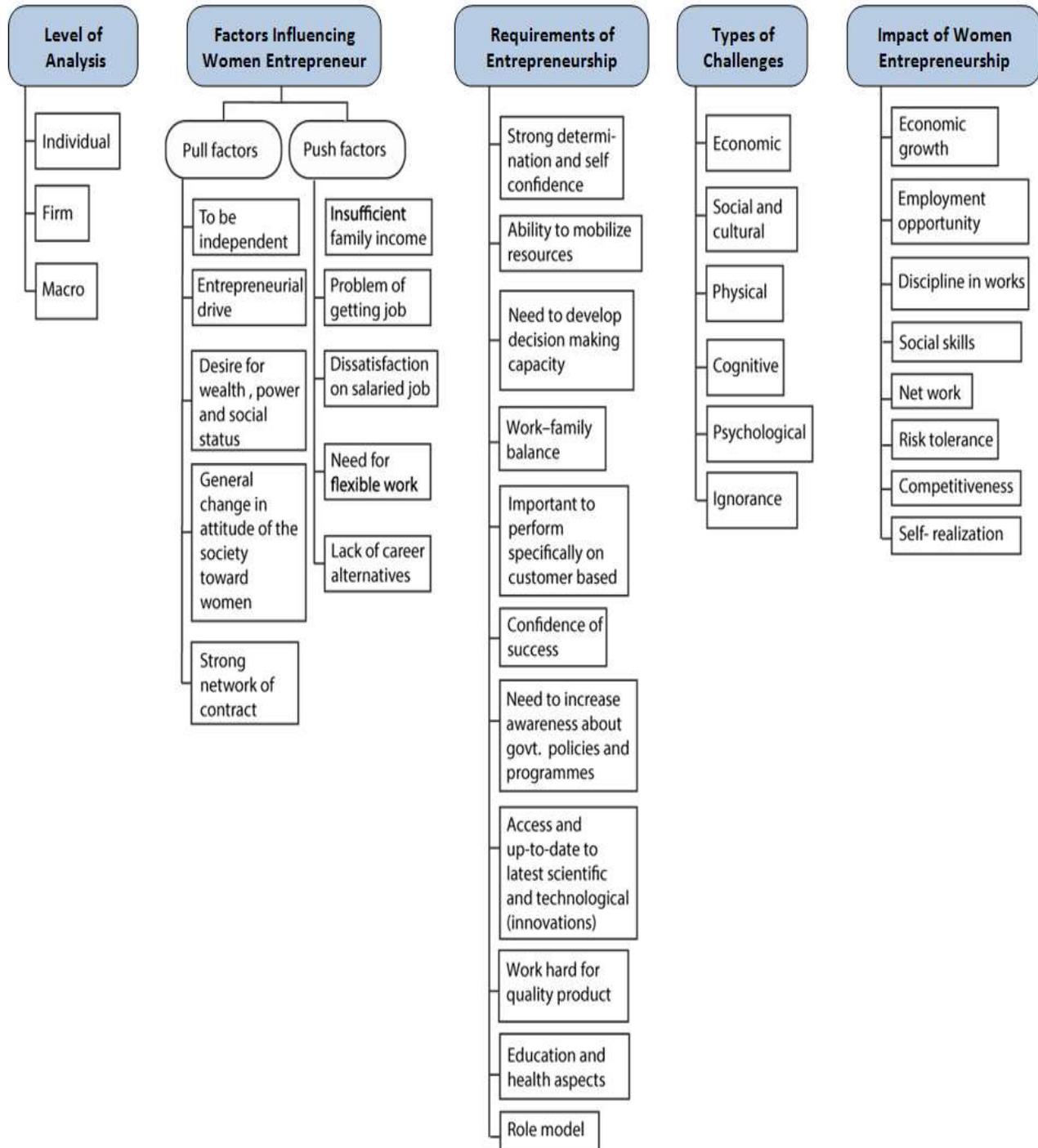
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Vijaya and Kamalanabhan (1998), found that a number of motivational factors have been identified in entrepreneurs. These include the values placed on innovativeness, independence, outstanding performance, and respect for work. Lack of these values definitely lowers the development of entrepreneurship. **Punitha et al. (1999)** studied the problems and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry region. A sample of 120 women entrepreneurs were personally interviewed out of which 42 belong to rural and 78 to urban areas. In the analysis the rural women mainly faced the problems are competition from better quality products and marketing problems. The problems for urban entrepreneurs are the competition from better quality products and difficulty in getting loans. The ignorance about schemes, distance from market and ignorance about agency and institutions are the least problems faced by both rural and urban women entrepreneurs. Lambing and Kuehl (2000) studied about the motivation behind women entrepreneurship. According to them, two factors basically motivated women entrepreneurship - one is dissatisfaction with corporate life and another is the desire for a challenge. This Study revealed that for many reasons dissatisfaction with corporate life may occur. This includes conflict between family and work responsibility, layoffs, the glass ceiling etc. Pandit (2000) analyses the home-based women entrepreneurs in Mumbai to identify entrepreneurial effectiveness among them. The study reveals that these enterprises are not regulated. They are based on goodwill; therefore, do not build brand equity. Moreover, these ventures carry out managerial functions without knowing that they are doing so. Generally, entrepreneurial effectiveness is tested by three ways namely sense of desire to prove entrepreneurship, success of achievement and sense of satisfactions. But this study shows that this may not be the only way to identify entrepreneurial effectiveness. Chakravarty's (2013) findings highlight that majority of the women respondents see inequality in rights, financial limitations, education, marketing and communication as barriers to new business. The beliefs of Gender-stereotypical regarding entrepreneurship are influential factor.

3. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the above discussions, a conceptual framework model is developed which is given below

Figure-1: The research Model depicts the phases of women entrepreneurs



4. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method is used. Required data are collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data are collected through structured questionnaires. To draw primary data, the study adopted a personal contact method. For making the study more meaningful and useful, there was an exchange of ideas. The researcher has

selected both registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs for the present study so that the overall picture and status of women entrepreneurs reveal. Sources of secondary data are as follows: Reports, Journals, Magazines and Newspapers, Books, Web, etc. Total sample size is 120. Cochran's sample size determination formula was used to calculate the proper sample size for this study. Data are selected randomly from the seven blocks of the study area. The sample consists of both registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs of Sonitpur district. Chi-Square -Test, Pearson Correlation, Multiple Regression are the statistical tools used for the study. Socio-economic profile of the respondents has been displayed in the table below.

Table – 4.1. Distribution of women entrepreneurs according to their Socio- Economic profile

Variables	Category	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Age	20-30	25	20.83
	30-40	55	45.83
	Above 40	40	33.33
Educational qualification	10th standard	18	15
	12th standard	57	47.5
	B.A.	40	33.33
	M.A.	05	4.17
Marital Status	Married	55	45.83
	Unmarried	40	33.33
	Widow	25	20.83
Family structure	Nuclear	75	62.5
	Joint family	45	37.5
Number of dependent members in family	3	57	47.5
	4-6	63	52.5
Monthly income	Up to Rs. 10,000	35	29.17
	Rs.10,000-30,000	55	45.83
	Rs.30,000-50,000	25	20.83
	Above Rs. 50,000	05	4.17
Location enterprise	Home based	72	60
	Rented Premises	48	40
Sources of finance	Self	62	51.67
	Relatives, friends	39	32.5
	Financial institutions	19	15.83
Size of enterprises	Small	120	100
	Medium	00	0
	Big	00	0
Legal structure of enterprises	Registered	35	29.17
	Non-registered	85	58.33
Origin of business	Self-created	68	56.67
	Bought	28	23.33
	Inherited	24	20
Community of women entrepreneur	SC	35	29.17
	ST	24	20
	OBC	20	16.67
	General	41	34.17

Source:Primary-data

5. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1.1. First objective: To analyze the factors which influence the women to become entrepreneurs

In Sonitpur district, self-employment opportunities in organized sectors is absolutely discouraging. Employment in government sector is gradually diminishing, investment is very low due to lack of resources and skilled man power in the study area. Therefore, self-employment is the best and last resort which is gradually increasing among all sections of the society. With the increase of female literacy (60.73 percent, 2011), urbanization, and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), entrepreneurial activities on traditional and non-traditional sectors are increasing day by day among women. Following table shows the motivating factors of women entrepreneurs in the study area.

Table-5.1.1. Percentage distribution of respondents based on motivating factors

Sl. No.	Variables	Total	
		No.	%
1	Earning money	25	20.83
2	Unemployment	16	13.33
3	To be independent	14	11.67
4	Interest in entrepreneurial activities	10	8.33
5	Responsibility due to death of close relatives	13	10.83
6	Existence of business culture in the family	08	6.67
7	Time management and business-family balance	11	9.17
8	Dissatisfaction with current jobs	10	8.33
9	Being entrepreneur was a lifelong goal	07	5.83
10	Lack of mobility	06	5
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

Figure -2: Motivating factors of women entrepreneurs

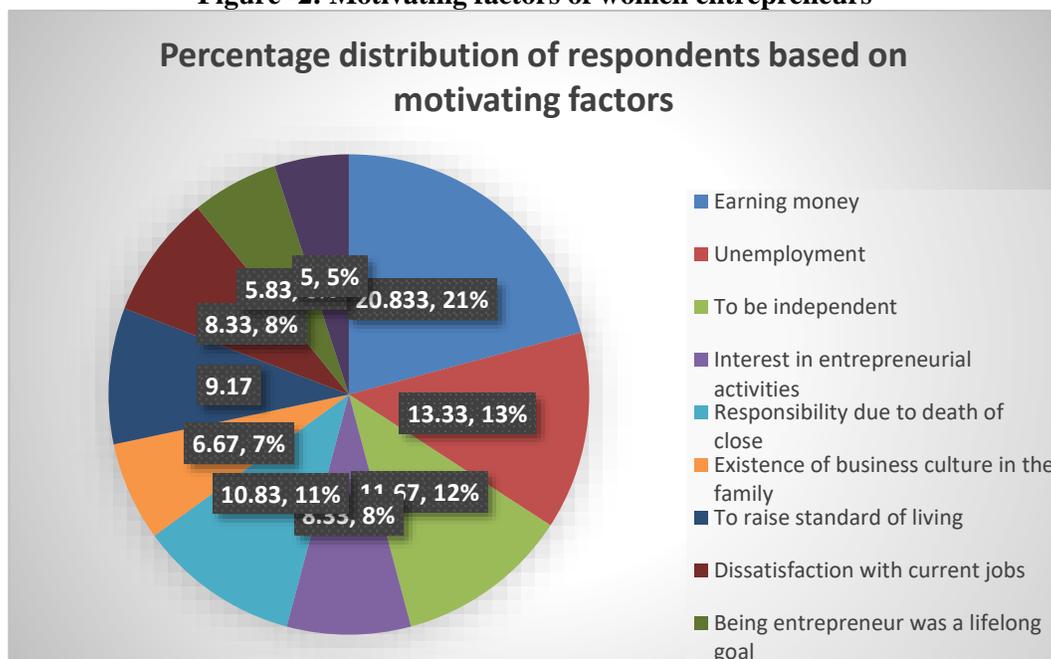


Table-5.1.1 and fig-5.1, show the various motivating factors. Since this district is in the bank of Brahmaputra river, it is agriculture based and also underdeveloped. A large section of the people (80 percent) directly depend on agricultural sector. Moreover, due to the absence of big industries, entrepreneurship development in the study area is low. Field study reveals that the main motivating factor is to earn money to raise their standard of living. Unemployment is also another motivating factor followed by to be independent, responsibility due to death of close relatives, Time management and business-family balance, dissatisfaction with current jobs, interest in entrepreneurial activities, existence of business culture in the family, being entrepreneur was a lifelong goal and existence of business culture in the family.

5.1.2.: Second objective: To study the problems faced by the women entrepreneurs

Being women is a mission in itself, then comes the most important undertaking of maintaining or surviving as a woman as hurdles keep coming in the shape of stereotyping, hypocrisy, societal frame of conducts and much more than that can be expressed in words. In this kind of scenario, a woman entering into entrepreneurship is difficult and a tough act. Women marketers face a wide array of demanding situations, so that they can increase their efforts to further develop and enlarge the firms they have established. These demanding situations and possibilities are developing rapidly. Though in India, women constitute 48.2 (Census, 2011) percent of the total population, however the entrepreneurial interest appears to be a male-dominated zone. This exhibits that women entrepreneurs aren't capable of running their firms successfully because of some (major) problems. The high-level growth in India will be possible if all sections of the society, particularly women become equal components in the development process. It's a widely known indisputable fact that the societies, that discriminate on the idea of gender tend to expertise lower economic development and reduction of financial condition, than the societies that exercise equality among men and women. Despite the constitutional provisions, there's a discrimination against women. In India, the laws and rules associated with women employment are discriminatory. The foremost vital nevertheless common problems of women entrepreneurs are discussed below

Table-5.1.2.1.: Classification of respondents based on problems faced by entrepreneurs

Sl. No.	Problems	Total	
		No.	%
1	Dearth of adequate Finance	20	16.67
2	Stiff competition	18	15
3	Cultural and social	13	10.83
4	Problem of marketing	10	8.33
5	Pricing problem	06	5
6	Gender bias	09	7.5
7	Day-to-day problem	07	5.83
8	Lack of role model	06	5
9	Absence of entrepreneurial Aptitude	07	5.83
10	Lack of mobility	08	6.67
11	Time management between business and family	07	5.83
12	Low risk-bearing ability	02	1.67
13	Lack of awareness about Government policies and schemes	07	5.83
14	Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

The problems faced by the women are also presented in weighted ranking method in the table-4. Below

Table-5.1.2.2: Problems of women entrepreneurs at the time of starting and running the enterprises(Weighted Ranking Method)

Sl.No.	Weight Particulars	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Rank	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Problems at the time of starting enterprises														
1	Dearth of adequate Finance	15	12	11	11	10	09	08	06	05	3		591	1
		150	108	88	77	66	45	32	18	10	3			
2	Cultural and social	14	11	10	09	07	08	05	04	02	01		501	3
		140	99	80	63	42	40	20	12	04	01			
3	Gender bias	13	10	10	09	07	06	04	03	01	01		463	6
		130	90	80	63	42	30	16	09	02	01			
4	Absence of entrepreneurial Aptitude	11	10	11	08	07	05	05	04	03	02		451	5
		110	90	88	56	42	25	20	12	06	02			
5	Lack of education on business management	10	08	05	08	04	03	05	02	01	01		336	8
		100	72	40	56	24	15	20	06	02	01			
Problems during the time of running enterprises														
6	Stiff competition	15	14	12	10	08	07	05	04	03	01		564	2
		150	126	96	70	48	35	20	12	06	01			
7	Problem of marketing	13	11	09	10	07	06	04	03	02	02		474	4
		130	99	72	70	42	30	16	09	04	02			
8	Pricing problem	09	07	05	03	06	04	01	03	01	02		287	12
		90	63	40	21	36	20	04	09	02	02			
9	Lack of role model	10	08	06	07	04	06	05	03	02	01		357	9
		100	72	48	49	24	30	20	09	04	01			
10	Time management between business and family	11	09	05	07	05	03	04	02	01	02		10	

● **Dearth of adequate finance**

Finance is considered to be the key part of the plan for any type of business in whatever, big or small. Female entrepreneurs are always suffering from working capital and financial resources. Typically, respondents are faced with a hit at the time of start-ups due to a lack of funds on two grounds. Next, women (usually) have no property and assets in their names to supply protection and assurance for a loan to achieve money from the external sources. Thus, their exterior sources of finance are limited. Secondly, financial institutions generally, considered that women are as less credit-worthy and no longer braveness borrower. According to financial institutions, ladies can, at any moment of their life, shut their business. Field study indicates that most of the respondents in the study area do not prefer to avail a loan from the economic establishments due to a complicated procedure. Consequently, women entrepreneurs are compelled to be structured on their private savings. Thus, respondents did not run their organizations due to the scarcity of funds. In the study area, the majority of respondents (16.67 percent) suffered from the shortage of required funds.

- **Stiff competition**

During investigation, it was seen that women entrepreneurs don't have large organizational set-ups to organize, run and control their enterprises or to push money for canvassing and advertisement. Stiff competition is one of the main problems that women have to face for their products from the organized sector, and also, from their male counterparts. Such a competition ultimately reduces the income of the women enterprises. 15 percent respondents suffer from this problem.

- **Social and cultural problems**

In the success of entrepreneurial activities, social and cultural environment has a great significance. Some specific problems (social and cultural) are generally associated with and indicated towards the women entrepreneurs in Sonitpur. Investigation reveals that social structure of the society that is male-dominated. In the male-dominated society, women are not usually treated as equal to men, but as lesser than them. The importance is given to boys and their development while discrimination against the girls is common practices (existing in most of the Indian families). Women entrepreneurs do not move to far places for marketing of their products because they have to look after their family first. This acts as a major obstacle to the women's entry into the entrepreneurial activities.

- **Marketing problem:**

Generally, women entrepreneurs face the problem of marketing of their products. As the male dominates the area and even women with adequate experiences do not help so much. Moreover, most of the products of women enterprises are seasonal and traditional. Therefore, sell their products is high in one season (festival season). Lack of proper publicity and low participation in trade fairs, exhibition, etc. at different places create problems in the marketing of their products. Among the respondents, there was also lack of effective online marketer. Due to the lack of sufficient computer knowledge, respondents could not become an effective online marketing which is now-a-days very important.

- **Pricing problem**

Determination of a reasonable price for the product is a major problem of women entrepreneur. The smooth running of an enterprise generally faces competition on the grounds of lower price of the products introduced in the market by the competitors. Since Sonitpur district is not economically developed; the respondents (5 percent) have struggled to get a rational price of their products in the market, particularly in the rural areas than in the urban areas.

- **Gender biases**

Gender biases serve as one of the important obstacles in the way women entrepreneurship. Since the study area is male-dominated, field study shows that 7.5 percent respondents suffered from this problem.

- **Day -to- day problem:**

Day to day problem at the workplace is a very important determinant for the entrepreneur and employee to perform better. If the basic facilities lack, then the employees will not be happy or feel uncomfortable to work. Consequently, the quality of the output gets affected and also deteriorated. Therefore, it is important to arrange a congenial and comfortable working atmosphere to maximize the production and profit. Moreover, physical and mental stress are also very important for the smooth running of entrepreneurial activities. During the field study, it was observed that both mental and physical stress was an issue of concern for respondents (5.83 percent) in day to day working life.

- **Lack of role model**

Role model is an important factor to encourage anyone to improve his/her quality. Women need role models to follow and support networks to demonstrate what is possible. Though there are successful women entrepreneurs (lower than male entrepreneurs) throughout the world, male entrepreneurs generally get better media coverage and publicity. However, women tend to start a business in those particular sectors where they have work experience, skills, and networks. The low percentage of female start-ups in the technological sectors shows the fewer numbers of women working in that sector in general. A large number of women who are employed in the technical positions and in other male-dominated sectors, such as transportation, mining, construction, etc. will

increase the number of women start-ups in these industries. Five percent have a lack of role model in the study area.

- **Absence of Entrepreneurial Aptitude:**

In the study area, it was seen that without an entrepreneurial bent of mind, most of the women took to training by attending the Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP). A section of women entrepreneurs (5.83 percent) were afraid to take the risk of the new businesses.

- **Lack of mobility:**

Another problem of respondents was the lack of mobility and travelling from one place to another. This is mainly due to the responsibility of their family first then business. The incapability of movement becomes a hindrance for the women, whether it is related to transport or accessibility of the market. Unlike men, women's mobility in India is limited due to various reasons. Women, on their own, find it difficult to get accommodation in the similar towns. Still, a woman is looked upon suspicion if a single woman asking for a room.

- **Time management between business and family balance:**

Time management between business and family is an important challenge. Most of the women entrepreneurs' (5.83 percent) in the study area, grapple with the objective of striking a family-business balance and manage time to run their enterprises. Generally, women (as expected) have to take care of their household activities, and at times, they find it difficult to make a choice. In the case of a joint family, women have to fulfil their duty towards the elders of the family also. At the same time, women are the boss at a workplace, where her physical presence is required and vital. In this situation, it is difficult for her to prioritize. When the time is not managed, it affects her work which requires supervisions or personal care. This happens all most all the respondents who are staying in the nuclear or joint family.

- **Low risk-bearing ability:**

Women lead a protected life as they have comparatively lower ability to endure economic and other risk factors. Throughout their lifetime in the Indian society this situation is common. About 1.6 percent respondents face this problem in the study area.

- **Lack of awareness about the govt policies**

During field study it came to notice that most of the respondents (5.83 percent) have no up-to-date knowledge about the government schemes and policies for marketing of their products. As a result, they were not able to get the facilities provided by the government. At present, in the study area, DIC, MSME, PMKVY etc. provide various government facilities including training and financial facilities which are important for entrepreneurship development. It may be pointed out that there is lack of publicity efforts from the government.

Progress on these challenges will herald a true distinction to confirm equality and direction for women in Sonitpur, and it'll ultimately facilitate in building sustainable economies through the event of women entrepreneurship.

5.1.3. Third objective: To study the role of Government for the development of women entrepreneurship

From the beginning of the Five -Year Plan, Government of India has giving emphasis on the scope of entrepreneurship, and related developments. The financial sector has a great importance in the overall entrepreneurship development of a country. Financial institutions act as the mediators that look after the transfer of resources from the net savers to net borrowers (i.e. from those who spend less than their earnings to those who spend more than their earnings). Financial institutions have been the major source of short, medium and long-term funds for the economy. Such institutions provide a variety of financial products and services so as to fulfil different needs of the commercial sector. These institutions generally give financial assistance to buy sheds, industrial plots, required capital at low rates of interest, to attend counselling sessions, etc. The main objective of the financial institutions being established, is to create positive climate for the regular growth of the women entrepreneurs and should foster them and make them flourish. The present study aims at highlighting the measures taken by the government and financial institutions with respect to the development of women entrepreneurs.

Tiwari et al (1981) revealed that the women were assisted by the government for entrepreneurship development through financial assistance in the form of term loans, as well as concessions in the form of subsidies, and the capital loan for self-employment, etc. Kumar (1998) reported from Bangalore that the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (Canara Bank's) provides training to women and helps them in setting up small industrial units, besides providing assistance for marketing their products. Bindiya (2001), who studied on the Women and Agriculture, revealed that the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) are playing a pivotal role in empowering the rural women through various credit schemes for entrepreneurship developments. Financial institutions, which provide assistance to the entrepreneurs, are divided into two categories, namely, governmental institution and the non-Governmental institution. Khandhar (2000) estimated the effects of micro finance on savings and borrowings, and his studies revealed that the micro finance not only induces voluntary savings, but also increases involuntary savings.

A variety of financial institutions have been set up at the national level to accomplish the requirements of the entrepreneurs. They are basically SIDBI, IDBI, IFCI Ltd., ICICI, IVCF, IFCI, Venture Funds Ltd and investment institutions like GIC, UTI, LIC, etc.

Technical and Financial assistance have been provided to the women entrepreneurs, through various institutions like DIC, SEF, NAYE, SIDBI, SIDO, WCFC, NISIET, etc. by the government. Different financial institutions have special financial schemes for the women entrepreneurship development.

5.2. Schemes and financial assistance for Women Entrepreneurship:

With a view that women entrepreneurs should come forward in the industrial field to become self-sufficient, governmental and financial institutions announced various schemes to provide financial assistance.

Annapurna Scheme: Under this scheme, loans are provided for those women entrepreneurs, who are setting up food catering industry (in order to sell packed snacks, meals, etc.) by the SBI of Mysore. Under this scheme, to fulfil the working capital needs of the business-like buying goods, kitchen tools, utensils and equipment, the granted loan amount can be used.

Stree Shakti Package: This scheme is offered by most of the SBI branches. It is meant for the women, who have 50 percent share in the ownership of a firm or a business and has taken part in the state-agencies-run Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs). This scheme offers 0.50 percent interest rate in case of a loan, which is more than Rs. 2 lakhs.

Bharatiya Mahila Bank Business Loan: Under this loan, financial assistance (MICRO loans, and SME loans) is provided to women entrepreneurs, who are looking forward to start new enterprises in the fields of the retail sector, against the property.

Udyogini scheme: The Punjab and Sind Bank have offered this scheme to give women entrepreneurs financial assistance of Rs.1 lakh. It is meant for those women entrepreneurs who are involved in the retail, small business enterprises, and agriculture.

Cent Kalyani Scheme: This scheme is provided by the Central Bank of India to basically help those women who are in the starting phase of a new enterprise or expanding with modification as an existing enterprise.

Mahila Udyami Nidhi Scheme: The Punjab National Bank has launched this scheme with the objective of assisting the women entrepreneurs involved in small-scale industries, through granting them soft loans, which have to be repaid over a period of 10 years. Under this scheme, there are various plans for the purchase of auto rickshaws, two-wheelers, cars, and the starting up of day care centres, and beauty parlours.

Orient Mahila Vikas Yojana Scheme: The Oriental Bank of Commerce has designed this scheme for those women, who hold a majority of share (51% share) capital individually or jointly in a proprietary concern.

MUDRA Yojana Scheme for women: This scheme has been launched by the Govt. of India for both the groups of women and individual women, who want to start small new enterprises and businesses like tailoring units, beauty parlors, tuition centers, etc. as well as a group of women wanting to start a venture together. The loan doesn't require any collateral security.

Stand- Up India Scheme: This scheme (was announced on 5th April 2016) facilitates bank loans between 10 lakhs and Rs. 1 crore. This loan amount is facilitating to at least one Schedule Caste or Schedule Tribe (ST) borrower and at least one-woman borrower per bank's branch for establishing a Greenfield enterprise.

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK):

It was set up to fulfil the credit needs of the poor women, who get engaged in an unorganized sector, which are not adequately addressed by the formal financial institutions. RMK aims at the promotions of the small enterprises among the poor women by providing credit as an instrument to the socio-economic change and the development through the provision of a package of financial and social development service for the development of women entrepreneurship.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC):

KVIC is a statutory organization that is engaged basically in promoting and developing Khadi and Village Industries, and its idea is to provide employment opportunities in the rural and backward areas with an objective of providing a backbone to these areas and strengthen their economy - which was created by an act of Parliament. Specialized financial Institutions are the institutions that have been set up to provide increased financial needs of commercials and trades in the area of venture capital, credit rating and leasing, etc.

Mahila Udyami Nidhi (MUN): This scheme is operated through the State Financial Corporation and State Industrial Development Corporation for providing equity type assistance to the women entrepreneurs for setting up the new industrial projects in the small sector.

Mahila Vikas Nidhi: Under this, women wanting to start their businesses in the field like spinning, weaving, block printing, handlooms, handicrafts, bamboo products, knitting, embroidery products, etc. can avail a loan for it.

In the study area, Bandhan Bank as a micro financier plays a very important role in this case. It provides loan to the SHGs. Khandkar (2000) and Lathif (2001) have analyzes that the increasing availability of micro-credits to the rural poor through SHGs will enable rural households to take up larger productive activities that empower the poor women; reduce the dependence on exploitative local money lenders; and increase savings.

In Assam and in study area, it was practically seen that the most popular schemes are basically Chief Minister Self Employment Scheme (CMSS) and Vocational Training; Under Assam Bikash Yojana (2008-09), Mukhyamantrir Karmajyoti Aachen (2005-06), Udyog jyoti scheme (2005-06), and Prime Minister Kaushal Vikash Yojana (PMKVY).

Table -5.2.1. Scheme-wise number of women entrepreneurs during 2017-18 in the study area

Schemes	Total no. of beneficiaries	No. of women entrepreneur	Rate of interest %	Total amount sanctioned (lacs)	Repayment
MUDRA	2824	1412	11	12,60,000	Regular
STAND-UP-INDIA	55	33	10.85	843.82	Regular
WCC	87	87		72	Regular
PMEGP	11	5	12.10	-	
SHGs	1075	10750		8412	Regular

Source: Lead Bank, UCO, Sonitpur

Table - 5.2.1, shows that most of the respondents were involved in SHGs. Though it is a group work, it helps to increase the entrepreneurial attitude among women. During the field study, it come to notice that recently women entrepreneurs are eager to take financial assistance from the MUDRA scheme. The number of women entrepreneurs under this scheme was 1412 out of 2824 in 2017-18. Moreover, the government allows a huge amount of money i.e. Rs. 12,60,000 lacs. In 2017-18 the rate of interest was 11 percent. The overall performance of MUDRA scheme is very satisfactory. Repayment of loans is also satisfactory. According to the bank officials, women are more regular in debt repayment than men.

Weaver Credit Card is a very effective program that gives a loan to weavers.

Handloom and Textile department is very active. In 2015-16, Rs 51.07 lakh was sanctioned to 117 weavers out of 500 (targeted). In 2018-19, Rs. 72 lacs were sanctioned to 87 weavers. In Sonitpur district, there are 2 Weavers Extension Service Unit (WESU) one in Jamogurihat and another in Dhekiajuli. Besides, there are 3 Handloom Training Centres in the study area. These are – Sootea, Thelamora, and Chariduar.

In case of **Stand-up India**, (the loan amount under this scheme ranges between 10 lacs to 1 crore) field study revealed that most of the respondents took financial assistance in their names on behalf of their husbands or male figure. Generally, women run only SSIs in the study area. Moreover, there is no investigation or field survey from the financial institutions to investigate the proper utilization of money in this matter. Due to this, irregularity in the repayment of the loan has arisen.

5.3. Non-Governmental Institutions

Non-governmental institutions also play a significant role in the entrepreneurship development, both in urban and rural areas, and also in reaching out to the women even in the remotest areas. A large number of established NGOs are operating all over the India, and at the grass root level, smaller NGOs are working. Thus, it gives credit related information and guidance services. In Sonitpur district, there are various NGOs that are basically involved in the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship development along with the development of the downtrodden people. These NGOs take measures to increase the employment opportunities, income generation, enhancing quality lives of grass-root level community through the social entrepreneurship. These are mainly Kokila Vikas Ashram, Sunrise Social Welfare Society, and Humanities Foundation for India's North East, Balipara Tract & Frontier Foundation, Institute of Integrated Resource Management, etc. Tezpur Mahila Samitee is a leading and old NGO in this case. Basically, this NGO provides training facilities to the women in different sectors like weaving, tailoring, embroidery, knitting, etc. for self-employment.

Table-5.3.1. Institutional assistance received by respondents

Sl. No.	Variables	Total	
		No. of Respondents	%
1	Financial	15	12.5
2	Infrastructure	0	0
3	Training	30	25
4	Marketing	09	7.5
5	Technology	6	5
6	No assistance at all	60	50
7	Total	120	100

Source: Primary data

Table –5.3.1 reveals that the 12.5 percent respondents were getting financial assistance. In case of infrastructural facilities, respondents did not receive advantages. Training facilities (certificate course) were availed by 25 percent respondents mainly from DIC, MSME and PMMY. In marketing of the product, 09 percent respondents received assistance through trade fare organized by government and NGOs. Technological assistance was received only by 6 percent. Highest number of respondents (60 percent) did not get assistance at all from government due to their illiteracy, lack of information and also complicity in procedural formalities.

5.4. Problems faced by women entrepreneur in getting financial assistance from organized financial institutions:

Field studies shows that women entrepreneurs are facing lots of problems in getting financial assistance from different financial institutions.

1. Studies revealed that around 60-70 percent of the problems faced by women entrepreneurs are credit related.

2. Moreover, along with credit, other challenges like collateral, the lack of training, lack of knowledge about the procedure of availing finance, delay in obtaining finance, inadequate finance, high rate of interest, low repayment period, negative attitude, absence of grace period, etc.

Charumathi (1997) reported that the banks and financial institutions, traditionally, viewed women entrepreneurship as more doubtful propositions than men in the entrepreneurship. Pal (1997) in a study on Women Entrepreneurship and the need for financial sector reforms found out that the lack of affordable credit from the formal financial sector was the most important challenge for women entrepreneurship.

Present study revealed that women operating a business may approach a local financial institution, like a local bank, Mahajan, landlord, etc. Generally, women come across many problems between her needs and the bank's requirements, which make the process of credit more difficult than she would have imagined. Women have also faced other problems while dealing with the commercial banks. In the study area, it came to notice that most of the respondents took loans under the Stand-up India scheme from the financial institutions in their names, but practically it was utilized by their husbands or male figures. Though the field survey by bank officials is necessary, practically this is not going on, it shows that there is a lack of proper evaluation of money utilization at regular time periods.

During investigation it came to know that the debt repayment of women entrepreneurs is almost regular (90%) according to bank authority, 10 percent loan repayment is irregular due to utilization of loan amount by the male figure which is taken in the name of their wives or close relatives.

5.5. Testing of Hypotheses:

Hypothesis - 1

H₀₁ : The level of education has no significant effect on the growth of income of women entrepreneurs of the study area.

To test the hypothesis a Chi – square test was conducted to examine whether the monthly income of the entrepreneurs depends on the level of education.

Table-5.5.1.:Chi – Square Test - 1

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	124.813 ^a	25	.000
Likelihood Ratio	114.914	25	.000
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 22 cells (61.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Result from the chi – square test above shows that level of monthly income of the entrepreneurs depends on the education since (Pearson Chi – Square = 124.813, df = 25, p = 0.000). It is significant at 5 percent level. This implies that when the entrepreneurs are well educated, this will surely boost the business in the sense that they already have more exposure relating to doing business. Therefore, it can be concluded that level of education has significant impact on the growth of entrepreneurship. Therefore, the said hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis – 2

H₀₂: Location of business has no significant impact on the growth of income of women entrepreneurs of the study area

To check whether the location of business has significant impact on the income of women entrepreneurs Chi – square test was conducted shown below

Table-5.5.2. :Chi-Square Test – 2

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	62.689 ^a	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	71.517	6	.000
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 6 cells (42.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.

From the chi – square table above, it is found that monthly income of the entrepreneur does not depends on whether they are from urban or rural area (Pearson Chi-square = 62.689, df = 6, p = 0.000). Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted and conclude that Location of business has no significant impact on the growth of income of women entrepreneurs in the study area.

Hypothesis - 3

H₀₃: The measures taken by the Government are not sufficient for the sustainable growth in income of women entrepreneurs in the study area.

To test the hypothesis multiple regression analysis is being adopted which is shown below:

Table-5.5.3.: Regression Analysis:

Table-5.5.3.1: Model Summary:

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of Estimate
1	.866 ^a	.750	.746	.421

a. Predictor(constant): Specialisation of Products, Family structure, Technical Education, Capital investment, Educational Level, Awareness about Govt. Policies, Assistance from Government.

Table-5.5.3.2: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	β	SE	β		
(Constant)	.391	.115		3.406	.001
Educational Level	.093	.023	.111	4.079	.000
Technical Education	.007	.072	.004	.098	.922
Family structure	.065	.042	.039	1.557	.120
Awareness about govt. Policies	.066	.046	.046	1.438	.151
Assistance from Government	-.045	.062	-.027	-.739	.461
Capital investment	.612	.022	.801	28.129	.000
Specialisation of Products	-.048	.043	-.028	-1.130	.259

a. Dependent Variable: Monthly Income

Regression Table:4.2 measures the amount of total variation in dependent variable due to independent variable. These beta value indicates the amount of changes in the dependent variable (growth in monthly income) due to changes in Specialization of Products, Family structure, Technical Education, Capital investment, Educational Level, Awareness about Govt. Policies, Assistance from Government.

It can be interpreted from the table that except Education & Capital Investment (at 5% level of significance) other factors- Specialization of Products, Family structure, Technical Education, Awareness about govt. Policies, Assistance from Government have not any significant impact on sustainable growth in income of women entrepreneur in study area.

Therefore, the hypothesis may be accepted because all identified factors don't have a significant relationship with growth of income. Hence it can be concluded that the measures taken by the government are not sufficient for the sustainable growth in income of women entrepreneurs in the study area.

FINDINGS

- The proportion of women entrepreneurs within the range of 30-40 is highest (48.14 percent) in the study area. The more women enterpriser in this age group is specially to support their family in terms of money and this age group of respondents can maintain a balance between family and business.
- Women entrepreneurs having post graduate or holding higher skill qualification, was very nominal. Extremely educated women in the study area showed no fascinated by doing business.
- During investigation, it was found that an out-sized section of women entrepreneurs has availed no training (65.58 percent) to formulate their thinking and aspirations consequently no further have polished results. Only 34.42 percent respondents have undergone training. Due to lack of proper training, most of the respondents have no skill to manage a venture.
- Most of the respondents are belonging to nuclear family. Due to gradual increase of urbanization and to maintain a higher standard of living, women in urban areas are forced to try and do entrepreneurial activities to satisfy their day to day wants.
- Investigation reveals that in urban areas most of the respondents (53 percent) have an interest to do their business in non-traditional areas (like financial consultant, café, running hobby classes, beauty parlor, creche, boutique, etc.) due to high demand. On the other hand, in rural areas, majority of respondents (80 percent) have an interest in traditional areas (like handloom, handicrafts, tailoring, embroidery, etc.). This is mainly due to low cost of production, handiness of raw materials, use of primitive strategies, etc.
- Field study shows that employment generation of women enterprises isn't satisfactory. Because all the enterprises are small size which were controlled and ran by individual respondent. This is basically due to lack of adequate money; women were running business with their family members and not with hair labor.
- Self- created women entrepreneurs were quite heritable and acquired. Throughout the study area, it came to know that 1st generation women enterpriser (self-created) were interested to try and do entrepreneurial activities on non-traditional sectors.
- Investigation revealed that due to lack of awareness and education, complicity in procedural formalities, lack of transparency and not obtaining advantages on time from government policies and schemes, etc., are some important factors that produce major issues for the event and enlargement of women entrepreneurship in the study area.
- Study shows another vital drawback that was the delay in implementation of policies that discourages women to maneuver one step ahead in beginning and running enterprises.

SUGGESTIONS

- Training facilities should be increased more both in rural and urban areas instead of centrally giving training facility in urban area (district-wise).
- Marketing facilities such as sales, purchases and other required support for timely start of an enterprise, etc. are necessary for respondents should be available at large. Government/NGOs should give emphasis on this part. At present online marketing is popular and respondent should be trained for that.
- Since education opens many ventures for qualified women in various fields, steps should be taken by the government to explore their talents.
- More commercial as well as industrial estates should be set up in various places (Block wise) of the study area.

- Necessary raw material should be available at concessional rate and raw material hub should be set up in both urban and rural areas.
- Workshop should be arranged in different places with the help of successful and renowned women entrepreneurs on traditional as well as non-traditional sectors.
- Corruption and malpractices, which act as a major challenge for availing loan and other facilities from the respective agencies should be abolished by launching appropriate credit delivery-based incentive schemes for all the employees of that particular organization. Strict vigilance is important for that.
- A stronger coordinated role of government, financial institutions, NGOs and educational institutions with an integrated approach is needed to enlarge the participation of women in small and medium enterprises. Easy credit system, low rate of interest, collateral free and adequate marketing facilities should be available.
- Women need encouragement and support not only from the family members but also from the society, financial institutions, and government; that atmosphere are very essential.

SUMMARY

The demography of study area is not entirely homogeneous as several linguistic, religious and ethnic communities and groups live in there. Though infrastructure facilities are not sound in Sonitpur, yet women entrepreneurs are moving ahead in all spheres with determination and focus. They are not only venturing into the traditional (or conventional) business ideas, but also, they are ready to explore various non-traditional (unconventional) fields and prove their best capacity. The government assistance was found beneficial to a small section of women entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas and also in educated women. Due to lack of awareness, complicacy in procedural formalities, lack of transparency and not getting benefits on time from government schemes and delay in implementation of policies discourages women to move one step ahead in starting and running enterprises. The impact of government policies and schemes were not favorable. Moreover, due to the ignorance, illiteracy, collateral, lengthy procedural complicacy and not getting the facilities on time, low repayment period, women entrepreneurs were not interested to avail loans from financial institutions. Studies indicate that most of the women (on their personal front as individuals) are less likely to perceive themselves as the entrepreneurs and avoid supporting systems like training and courses targeted at the “entrepreneurs”. The impact of family life and child care (on their personal front), as well as the lack of high-profile role models are other limiting factors in the study society. Women’s traditional “care-giver” roles; inequality in the sharing of these roles between men and women, as well as our perceptions of what are appropriate roles for women and men (stereotyping and hypocrisy) both at the home from and outside the home, continue to serve as the key constraints to women’s economic empowerment. Progress on these challenges can bring in a real difference to ensure equality and empowerment for women and it will ultimately help in building sustainable economies through the development of women entrepreneurship in the study area. Since education and awareness is very important to increase entrepreneurship development among the women, therefore, government should give much emphasis on the expansion of education (vocational and technical).

REFERENCES

- Bindya, B. (2001). *Women Entrepreneurship: Challenges and Achievements*. NISIET.
- Chakravasrty, E. (2013), The Rural Women entrepreneurial edge, JORS Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 10, pp 33-36
- sCharumathi, B. (1991). *Women Entrepreneur’s Challenges and Prospects* (p. p.57). Coimbatore: Karpagam Arts and Science College Affiliated to Bharthiar University.
- DIC, Sonitpur
- Economic Survey of India, 2010-11

- Khandker, S. R. (1998). *Fighting poverty with microcredit: Experience in Bangladesh*. Oxford University Press.
- Lambing, P., & Kühl, C. (2000). *Entrepreneurship*. New Jersey, USA: Prentice Hall.
- Pandit, V. (2000). *Home based women entrepreneurs in Mumbai*.
- Punitha, M., Sangeetha, S., & Padmavathi, K. (1999). Women entrepreneurs: Their problems and constraints. *The Indian Journal of Labor Economics*, 42(4), 707–716.
- Tiwari et al (1981): *Women Entrepreneurship of eastern, UP, Challenges and Strategies of Empowerment*. Discovery publishing house, 1987, p.7.
- V. Vijaya, T.J. Kamalanabhan (1998), 'A Scale of Assess Entrepreneurial Motivation, *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 7(2), 183-189