

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH FOOD PROCESSING UNITS

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Abstract:

Women empowerment helps women to take their own decisions by breaking all personal limitations of the society and family. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Moreover women are well artistic in preparation food hence the same talent will utilizes in food processing is good to enhance the food processing units. Women need bright and more capable environment to take their own decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or the country. In order to develop the country women empowerment is an essential.

Key words: Women empowerment, economic development, food processing.

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INTRODUCTION

India's democratic polity, her laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. Over the years the focus on women has witnessed a gradual shift from purely "welfare" oriented schemes and "development programmes" to their "empowerment" by recognizing them as equal partners on the road to progress. Women empowerment helps women to take their own decisions by breaking all personal limitations of the society and family. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Always an empowered woman is independent because of the knowledge and skills. An empowered woman doesn't mean that she is highly educated with employment rather along with it she should be rational, intelligent and skilful. When a woman is empowered, can able to take any decisions based on her own ability.

Education is an important factor for the development of every nation and its human resource too. Education is a basic component of social structure and national identity. It leads to an improvement in the depth and quality of public opinion, as well as to more active participation of the marginalized in the democratic process. No society has ever liberated itself economically, politically, or socially without a sound base of educated women. Education has a direct impact on Women empowerment as it creates in them awareness about their rights, their capabilities and the choices and opportunities available to them.

Review of Literature

Duflo, E. (2011), Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge. The study argues that the inter-relationships of the empowerment and development are probably too weak to be self sustaining, and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Sethuraman, K. (2008), The Role of Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence in Child Growth and Undernutrition in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India, Research Paper No. 2008/15, United Nations University. This research paper explores the relationship between

women's empowerment, domestic violence, maternal nutritional status, and the nutritional status and growth over six months in children aged 6 to 24 months in a rural and tribal community. This longitudinal observational study undertaken in rural Karnataka, India included tribal and rural subjects.

Frenette, M., Coulombe, S. (2007), Has Higher Education among Young Women Substantially Reduced the Gender Gap in Employment and Earnings? Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Canada. This research paper examine the role of rapidly rising educational attainment among young women in raising their relative position in the labour market and suggests that the educational trends have not contributed towards a decline in the full-time employment gap.

Food Processing Industry:

The food processing sector is crucial to India's development. The Food Processing Industry Sector in India is one of the largest in terms of production, consumption, export and growth prospects. Important sub-sectors in food processing industries are Fruits & Vegetables Processing, Fish Processing, Milk Processing, Meat and Poultry Processing, Packaged/ Convenience Foods, Alcoholic Beverages and Soft Drinks and Grain Processing etc. and also Food processing involves the transformation of raw animal or plant materials into consumer-ready products, with the objective of stabilizing food products by preventing or reducing negative changes in quality. The fast paced life with a changing socio-economic environment provides less time for food preparation and so there is a growing demand for packaged and processed food.

Methods of food processing are

- Canning. The food is heated to a high temperature. ...
- Fermentation. The breakdown of sugars by bacteria, yeasts or other microorganisms under anaerobic conditions. ...
- Freezing. ...
- Modified atmosphere packaging.

Women empowerment is essential to enhance the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from the resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well being. Women play a vital role in providing nutrition. Women are well artistic in preparation food hence the same talent will utilize in food processing is good to enhance the food processing units. Food sector's employment potential is much higher than any other sectors in the economy for women. Since there is a close relationship between food preparation and the women the study considers that women empowerment through food processing units is an effective instrument.

There is also a need for larger disposable income which has created a number of women going out to work, yet not wishing to short-change their households on wholesome meals. Along with that is a greater awareness of the need for quality and safety in food and nutrition. All these factors cause a huge challenge to the Food Processing Industry to come up with appropriate food products to suit these varying needs.

Objective of the study:

- 1) To study the problems faced by the women in food processing units.
- 2) To offer suggestions to empower the women in food processing units.

Problems Faced by Women in Food Processing Sector

Women face several problems in food processing units are listed below:

- Lack of access to markets, capital, packaging material and poor food processing technology make it difficult for women.
- Due to unequal distribution of responsibilities in the household, women are shouldered with multiple responsibilities of taking care of the family and doing business, hence it becomes difficult for them to engage fully in business activities.
- Lack of access to suitable education and training in the childhood make it difficult for women to produce good quality products and realize competitive advantage in the free market economy.

- Inconvenience in transport and communication facilities are other factors which make the processing sector uncompetitive.
- There is irregular supply of raw materials throughout the year and due to varied agro-climatic conditions the availability of raw materials is concentrated in particular areas. Further, most of the products produced are consumed afresh at market level.
- The tax levels on the processed foods are very high.
- The financial institutions/banks consider processing as a high risk sector. Hence, this sector is capital starved. And also banking and financial institutions differentiated between female and male for disbursement and sanctions of loans and rated women entrepreneurs inferior.
- They have no job security in this area etc.

Suggestions:

- A financial institution provide an equal chance to access financial service for both male and female, but collateral becomes a constraint to women in accessing loans.
- Education in society is of paramount importance of eliminating the negative ideology on the role of women's participation in the economic development of the household and the nation at large. Women should participate equally in the national economic development agenda.
- Educational development of women entrepreneurs requires the facilitation of comprehensive training in the area of production innovation, marketing strategy, business record keeping and financial management in order to improve business.
- Implementation of this policy depends on the political will of government officials to enforce the policy by means of laws and regulations in creating a women friendly user environment.
- The use of mobile technology would enable women to expand business networks to various stakeholder hence improvements of their business and receive necessary

market information for making a sound business decisions about where to sell their products at high prices. The government and other stakeholders should educate women entrepreneurs on the importance of applying mobile technology-based services to enhance their business while handling family responsibility at their own pace.

Limitations of the study:

This study sets a baseline for future research opportunities. This study focused on exploring the challenges facing women entrepreneurs, hence further research on comparative analysis about the challenges facing both women and men entrepreneurs in the same environmental setting in order to establish whether they face the same or not. In addition, further study may want to investigate additional variables that exert a fundamental influence on women's business development.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study have shown that women entrepreneurs operated in an unfavorable socio-cultural environment which was characterized by unequal distribution of social responsibility, inadequate education, and patriarchal ideology, poor quality of products, inadequate capital and the unreliable market for the produced goods. These problems prohibit women entrepreneurs to realize higher profits and expand business networks in other regions and outside the country. Women entrepreneurs were found more at a disadvantaged position as they faced more challenges as compared to their male counterparts since they had to also handle family responsibilities entirely while doing small businesses.

Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in recent times. The economic empowerment of women is of paramount importance to political thinkers, social scientists and reformers. Government has devised many programs to empower women in various avenues. Increased participation of women in food processing and labour force is a prerequisite for improving the position of women in society self-employed women. The entry of women particularly in food processing will be encouraged and motivated. Food processing are motivating other women to engage in the same activities with the right assistance and strengthening their capacities besides adding to the family income and national productivity.

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