

Socio Economic Factors Affecting the Development of Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh: A Study in Feni District

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Abstract: *Women's participation in the economic sphere is increasing day by day. This study was conducted to assess the socio economic factors that affect the development of women entrepreneurs in Feni district. This study is descriptive in nature and mainly primary data is used for this article but to some extent secondary types of data were also incorporated. To execute this research, 100 respondents were taken using simple random sampling. The collected data was analyzed by using both descriptive and analytical procedures. After coding and organizing the data, statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze further cleaning. Data analysis showed that economic and technological factors had positive impact upon women entrepreneurs in Feni district than other social and cultural factors. Hence it is recommended that government and other financial institutions should work with NGOs to strengthen women's socio economic development through imparting skill training, business oriented information and advising on services.*

Keywords: Women entrepreneurs' development, Feni district, social, cultural, economic and technological factors

1. Introduction

Women are more than half of the world population. Women have performed various roles as mother, care giver, producers, and housekeepers to support her families. Women's participation in the economic sphere is getting narrower. Despite all the hardships, their valuable contributions have never been realized in the GDPs, GNP and so on. Therefore, women can be considered as the valuable human resource for the country. The growing involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities has added a new dimension in the socio economic sphere of Bangladesh. As for example, BWCCI's (Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry) Founder President Ms. Selima Ahmed has been a role model for women entrepreneurs and has requested women to take part in all kinds of economic activities more proactively and sustainably.

The development of Women Entrepreneurship is one of the crucial issues of contemporary development agenda in many developing countries. Women entrepreneur can be defined as a female person who has along or with one or two more partners start or inherit a business and eager to take financial, administrative, social risks and responsibilities and participate in day to day management activities (UNDP, 2004). Or in other words, women entrepreneurs can be defined as the woman or group of women who initiate organize and operate any business venture.

Several studies carried out across the world show that involvement of women in entrepreneurship compared to men (GEM 2003) is less. Why is this so? Environmental factors (social, cultural and economic) and their impacts on women's entrepreneurship are considered significant in order to deal with question. Feni is one of the enriched

districts in Bangladesh because of high rate flow of remittance and locational advantages. However, various women's entrepreneurs are emerging here day by day. Therefore this study is aimed to find out the socioeconomic factors that have the beneficial role in the development of women entrepreneurs in this area, in general.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To find out the socio-demographic factors that affect women's socio-economic development.
- To identify social, cultural, economic and technological factors that hinder women's socio economic development.

2. Research Methodology

The questionnaire of this survey was administered among the respondents within Feni district of Bangladesh. A questionnaire was designed to gather primary data. The respondents were asked to rank each item on a 5 point Likert scale (5= strongly agree, 1= strongly disagree) to identify key factors that were responsible for the women's entrepreneurship development. Regression analysis was done to reveal the relationship of socio-economic factors upon the development of women's entrepreneurship.

The research is descriptive in nature. Convenient sampling technique was adopted through 100 questionnaires (Appendix A) and floated to the women entrepreneurs in different fields.

Primary data so collected were used to assess the socio-economic factors of women entrepreneurs. The survey has been administered by using questionnaire with both open ended and closed ended question (Appendix). Four factors

were used as prime parameters in the form of independent variables to find the dependent variables i.e. women's entrepreneurs' development. SPSS 25.00 was used to analyze the findings.

3. Literature Review

Women entrepreneurs constitute less than 10% of the total business entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, whereas women in advanced economics own more than 25% of all business. According to the International labor organization report (1980), Women are fifty percent of the world's population, do two-third of the world's work hours, receive ten percent of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's property.

Parvin, et al (2012), studied the women entrepreneurship development in Bangladesh and identified some challenges and obstructions from socio-cultural environment. They pointed out that it is too tough to work in male dominated society. They also suggested some pragmatic initiatives to be taken regarding policy implication and self-cognizant.

Socio-economic development is defined in different ways for various contexts of social, political, biological, science and technology, language and literature. In the socio economic perspective, development means the improvement in people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skill development and employment (Mebratu, 1998). It is also defined as the process of creating economic and social opportunities for women and their families. Socio economic development is desirable for every society. The development its measured with-GDP, life expectancy, literacy and level of employment (Hicks and Streeten 1979). Bangladeshi women are more conscious and involved in all aspects of their societies. Now a day they are more aware for improving their skill through education and technological knowledge before being an entrepreneur. On the other hand their active participation in political, economic and cultural activities cannot be overemphasized any more.

Factors influencing women's socio economic development

The factors influencing socioeconomic development are cultural, financial and socio- demographic in nature and of them the most important is the technological ones.

Bangladeshi culture and customs are basically patriarchal society where the women face various constraints to empowerment. As (Adegroye and Adegroye, 2008) find out from their study that harmful cultural practices militate against women socio economic empowerment. There are cultural practices that promote gender based violence and these acts of violence are usually directed at women (Bisika 2008). The study conducted by (Briere and Jordan 2004) identified socio cultural factors such as poverty, social inequality and inadequate social support as some of the variables that hamper women's socio-economic development.

The other most pertinent obstacle to economic development is the shortage of capital. This is raised from the vicious circle of poverty. Poverty is both a cause and a consequence

of a country's low rate of capital formation. In an underdeveloped country, the masses are under poverty line. They are mostly illiterate and unskilled, use outdated capital equipment and methods of production (Jhingan 1997). As (Muhammad and Safiya 2013) opines that where women have no direct access to land and cannot have collateral because of patriarchal and customary practices that pass property through the male line, limit women from having direct access to credit. The women are most credit worthy than men, but legal requirements and lack of collateral still limit women's access to bank credit (Aca and Nwosu, 2017).

Education, family, marital status and religion are the crucial factors to promote women's socioeconomic participation. Suleiman (2009) identified education as the bedrock for empowerment and the only panacea to women empowerment. Without education, it will be difficult for women to become economically empowered in the world. Education is the most effective strategy for promoting women empowerment (Muhammad and Safiya 2013). As Danjuma, Muhammad et al. (2013) states that the issue of women education is essential for socio economic development and the women are not educated well to contribute their useful quota of the society.

Bangladeshi families are mainly nuclear where patriarchal society gives important decision about their family and women. Early marriage is very common here and religious constraints have a great impact upon the women to being empowered.

3.1 Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were made in the research:

1. Social factors have played a great role on the development of women's entrepreneurship.
2. Cultural factors have a positive relation to the development of women's entrepreneurship.
3. Economic factors have an impact on women entrepreneurship.
4. Technological factors have a significant relationship with the women entrepreneurs' development.

4. Analysis and Findings

Table 1: Socio-Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21-30	58	58.0
31-40	34	34.0
41-50	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0
Family Status		
Joint	36	36.0
Nuclear	64	64.0
Total	100	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	68	68.0
Single	25	25.0
Divorced	7	7.0
Total	100	100.0
Sources of Fund		
Self	59	59.0

Family	41	41.0
Total	100	100.0
Initial Capital		
0-1	35	35.0
1-5	44	44.0
5-above	21	21.0
Total	100	100.0
Education		
Below SSC	22	22.0
HSC	46	46.0
Graduate	24	24.0
Post Graduate	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0
Religion		
Islam	93	93.0
Hindus	7	7.0
Total	100	100.0
Way of doing Business		
Online	53	53.0
Store	32	32.0
Others	15	15.0
Total	100	100.0
Business type		
Parlor	27	27.0
Tailoring	20	20.0
Boutique	24	24.0
Cloth	11	11.0
Handicraft	18	18.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 1 represents that a total 100 respondents were enrolled in the study, where all the respondents were women. The table reveals out that most of the women entrepreneurs' age ranged between 21-30, that was 58 percent. The second highest of respondents in the categories was 31-40 that was 34 percent. Most of the female entrepreneurs come from the nuclear family (64%). In the context of marital status 68 percent women were married where 25 percent were single. Moreover, most of the women started their business by individual savings (59%) while few women were supported by family (41%). From the table it can be said that about 44 percent women would like to start a business with an initial capital of 1-5 lack Tk. On the other hand, rest of the women (35%) had started their business with 0-1 lac Tk. In terms of level of education the results had demonstrated that most of the respondents belonged to HSC (46%), and Graduate level (24%) participants were in the second position.

With regards to the religion, most of the women entrepreneurs were Muslim (32%). Furthermore, most of them preferred to do online businesses (53%) and (32%) liked to do store business. On the other hand in the types of business, 27 percent owned parlor business; then 24 percent were engaged in boutiques.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Factor			
Level of education is satisfactory for women	100	4.0000	.91010
Poverty is a hindrance for women entrepreneur	100	4.4100	.49431

Social attitude is not favorable to women entrepreneur	100	4.6200	.78855
women get less support from family	100	4.4800	.65874
Cultural factor			
Women entrepreneur face gender discrimination	100	4.2720	.28642
Religious factor is important cause for women	100	4.3500	.88048
early marriage is another constraint	100	2.7700	.86287
Culture has a great impact behind women entrepreneur	100	3.7700	1.22972
Economic Factor			
Women entrepreneur hardly get initial capital	100	3.7525	.49428
Govt. program and policies is conducive for women entrepreneur	100	4.0000	.91010
Income tax for women is maintain minimum level for women	100	4.4000	.49237
Access to market is very easy for women entrepreneur	100	4.6200	.78855
Non-Govt. institutions are not supportive for women	100	4.4900	.65897
Availability of labour is hardly found by women	100	3.8500	.74366
Technological Factor			
It is easy to get utility services for women entrepreneur	100	4.3150	.25502
Technical support is available for women	100	2.1400	.76568
Women entrepreneurs are more interested to use update technology	100	2.7100	.83236

Table 2 reveals that the socio economic factors (Independent variable) affected women entrepreneurs' development (Dependent variable). In the above table, the highest rank of dimension presents a mean score of 4.62 which lied in the Economic factors that denotes economic issues such as initial capital, tax, Govt policy and market entry etc. were closely related to the development of women entrepreneurs. On the other hand, a good SD is found (0.25) in Technological factor that means technology is also correlated with the women entrepreneurs. In this survey more women had preferred to do online business rather than offline or store business.

4.1 The Results of regression analysis

Table 3: Predict the relationship confirm the model fitness

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.819	0.671	0.657	0.23848	2.695

ANOVA ^b						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	11.001	4	2.75	48.358	.000 ^b
	Residual	5.403	95	0.057		
	Total	16.404	99			

In the table above, it is found that the value of correlation of coefficient, R=0.819 with the R square =.671 which indicates the high level of prediction. Therefore this values shows that the independent variables (Social factors, Cultural factors, Economic factors and Technological

factors) explain variability and predicts the women entrepreneurs' development.

Table 4: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.365	.380		.962	.039
	Social Factor	.050	.033	.091	1.500	.137
	Cultural factor	-.009	.047	-.012	-.193	.847
	Economic Factor	.114	.041	.167	2.762	.007
	Technological Factor	.471	.034	.811	13.692	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Women Entrepreneur development						

Above un-standardized coefficients indicate how much the women entrepreneur's development varies with an independent variable (Social factors, Cultural factors, Economic factors and Technological factors) when all other independent variables are held constant. Here, B is significant if $P < .05$. Therefore the above table shows that the results of independent variable has an impact on dependent variable, B value of Social factor ($B = .091$; $sig = .137$) and Cultural factor ($B = -.012$; $sig = .847$) which are not supported according to the hypothesis 1 and 2 that means these factors have no impact upon the development of women entrepreneur in Feni District. On the other hand, B value of Economic factors ($B = .167$; $sig = .007$) and Technological factor ($B = .811$; $sig = .000$) that supported the Hypothesis 3 and 4, that means Economic and Technological factors are highly correlated with the women entrepreneurs' development.

5. Limitations and Further Research

To conduct this study, various limitations had been found and the further research can be carried out on:

- Unwillingness of respondents that posed a great problem to complete the research.
- Lack of understanding of questionnaire is another constraint.
- In this study the effects of social, cultural, economic and technological factors were investigated. It is suggested that each of the factors are to be considered in more detail.
- In this survey, the difference between women in different sectors of the industry was not considered. It is suggested that women entrepreneurship in various industrial and non-industrial sectors to be examined separately.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the fact that women's contribution towards the economic growth of the nations is explicit, but it is remained unnoticed and uncounted. Till recent time women were kept away from decision making processes to undermine their positions. The main purpose of this research is to find whether there is any relationship or impact of social, cultural, economic and technological factors on women entrepreneurs' development in Feni district. However, the results reveal that economic and technological factors play an important role of development of women entrepreneurs.

On the other hand social and cultural factors had no impacts upon the development of women entrepreneurs. In this study it is proved that economic and technological factors had a good impact on women entrepreneurs for improving their socio economic participation. As such the following suggestion will be beneficial for them:

- Government program, policies and attitudes towards women entrepreneurs should be made more flexible so that they can take credits following an easy process.
- The Government should cooperate with NGOs so that they can work with women to strengthen women's socio economic development through the provision of different skill training, business oriented information and advising services.
- The financial institutions should develop a new system which helps women so that they can easily access to take credit and it should also encourage women to participate in all aspects of social and economic development.
- Continuing of government programs, policies and designs to support entrepreneurial activities.
- Technological advancement should be adopted in all types of businesses.
- Elimination of discrimination between men and women in case of access to the markets.

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Appendix A

Dear respondents,

I am going to conduct a research on –**Socio - economic Factors Affecting the Development of Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh: A Study in Feni District**. This questionnaire consist of statements that provide you with an opportunity to describe yourself by indicating the degree to which each statement is true of the way you feel , think or act most of the time. There are five possible responses to each sentence to make your choice on the answer sheet by putting tick (✓) mark for each sentence. Your valuable, honest and unbiased decision is required for the research.

A) Demographic Factor

Name :

- Age** : 21-30 31-40 41-50 50-Above
- Family Status** : Joint Nuclear
- Marital Status** : Married Single Divorced Widow
- Sources of Fund** : Self Family Loan others
- Initial Capital** : 0-1 1-5 5-above
- Education** : Below SSC HSC Graduate Post Graduate
- Religion** : Islam Hindus Christian Buddhism
- Way of Doing Business** : Online Store Others
- Business Type** :

Parlor	Tailoring	Agro-based business
Boutique	Cloth	Others
Handicraft	Grocery and stationary	

B) Social factors

Sl no	Characteristics	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Level of education is satisfactory for women in Bangladesh.					
2	Poverty is a hindrance for emergence of women entrepreneur in our society.					
3	Women give more importance to raise their children rather than making their own identity.					
4	Social attitude is not favorable to create women entrepreneur in our society.					
5	Most of the time women get less support from their family for doing their independent business.					

C) Cultural Factors

Sl no	Characteristics	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Women entrepreneurs generally face gender discrimination in their workplace.					
2	Religious factor is one of the most important causes for doing business of women entrepreneur.					
3	Early marriage is another constraint to create women entrepreneurs.					

4	Culture has a great impact behind every women entrepreneur.					
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D) Economic Factor

Sl no	Characteristics	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Women Entrepreneurs hardly get initial capital for starting their business.					
2	Govt.program and policies is conducive for women Entrepreneurs.					
3	Income tax for women entrepreneur maintains minimum level.					
4	Access to market is very easy for women entrepreneur.					
5	Non Govt. Financial Institutions are supportive towards women entrepreneurs.					
6	Availability of labor is hardly found by women entrepreneur.					

E) Technological Factor

Sl no	Characteristics	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	It is easy to get utility services (Gas, water etc.) for doing business.					
2	Technical support is available for women entrepreneurs.					
3	Women entrepreneurs are more interested to use communication technology for updating their business.					

F) Women Entrepreneurs Development

Sl no.	Characteristics	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Socio economic factors are responsible for the development of women entrepreneurs.					

Thanks for your participation