

**DYNAMICS OF URBAN SELF-
EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING
AMONG MUSLIM WOMEN: CASE-STUDY
OF MUMBAI**

THE THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
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Chapter Twelve: Conclusion and Recommendations

12.1 Introduction

The era of growing liberalisation and withdrawal of the State from the public domain has perpetuated imbalances in the structure, patterns of employment and institutions of the Indian labour market. Productive self-employment may provide expanding opportunities and can be used as a tool of inclusion. Manufacturing sector plays an important role in tackling inequality and unemployment since it is more labour intensive and less unequal. Muslim women possess artistic potential but their economic conditions are too unfavourable for this potential to be realized. The preponderance of Muslim women in self-employment and their increased involvement in the manufacturing sector suggests that appropriate interventions will help in alleviating their economic vulnerability. Before dwelling into reducing the constraints on their entrepreneurship, it is necessary to note the lessons drawn from this research.

12.2 Lessons Drawn from Secondary Data

Various published and unpublished secondary data sources have been tapped to position Muslim community in India and to locate women from this community in the labour market in India and in the state of Maharashtra.

12.2.1 Status of Muslim Community in India

Since Muslims are the largest religious minority in India, their presence in the economy is dominant. Unfortunately, it has been analysed that this growing population has remained excluded from the developmental process. Certain distinct features of the community reflect its poor social, economic and educational status.

The Sex Ratio of the community is highly skewed in favour of men and has shown the sharpest decline in recent years. The age distribution of the Muslim population reflects a high young dependency ratio.

Moreover, the community suffers from high levels of economic deprivation. There is a huge gap in the household monthly per capita consumer expenditure, which is a proxy for income, of Muslims and other socio-religious groups. An analysis of asset ownership, in terms of land possessed, reveals that the size of land possessed or cultivated, is the lowest among Muslims. Regarding household type, majority of Muslim households in rural areas were either self-employed or engaged as rural labour. In urban areas, highest proportions of Muslim households were self-employed. On the other hand, the proportions of regular wage/salaried households were the lowest among Muslims.

Data also suggest educational backwardness among the Muslim community. Highest proportions of Muslims belong to the non-literate group. There are not many differences between Muslims and other religious groups at the primary and middle

levels of education. The differences are more noticeable at higher levels of education. The situation is worse in case of Muslim women. In rural areas, more than half of the Muslim female population is illiterate. Such alarming rates of illiteracy in today's knowledge era are a cause of concern. Even in urban areas, the educational attainment of Muslim women is poor. The proportion of Muslim women acquiring higher education is abysmally low. The current attendance rates in educational institutions show lowest levels for Muslims. A large number of Muslim students are first generation learners. Low levels of education have a depreciating effect on the quality of human capital in the economy. It negatively impacts the employability of the people of the community, reducing their income levels further.

12.2.2 Employment Situation of Muslim Women in India

Given the deplorable situation of Muslim community in India, it is necessary to study the conditions facing the women in the community in relation to their level of employment assuming that employment is a crucial aspect of inclusive growth. The dichotomous nature of Indian labour market lends itself to inequality. Women and Muslims constitute a major part of the neglected section of the labour market. Muslim women are doubly disadvantaged, as women and as members of the marginalised minority community. For a macro-perspective, it was considered necessary to locate Muslim women in the Indian Labour Market.

The employment status of Muslim women is known by analyzing Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Work Participation Rate (WPR) and Unemployment Rates (UR). Analysis has been done at all-India level and at the level of Maharashtra State.

It has been seen that at all India level, the performance of rural areas in LFPR is better than urban areas for all groups. LFPR among Muslims is low due to low LFPR for women in the community. In spite of various Governmental efforts of employment expansion, LFPR for Muslim women has declined in recent years. Similarly, WPR that indicates the number of persons employed suggests very low levels for Muslim women. In rural areas, their work participation is low due to limited engagement in agricultural activities. The main reasons given for poor economic participation of Muslim women in urban areas are low levels of education, restricted mobility and limited opportunities. The male-female differential is highest among Muslims. Women from other communities also face disadvantage in the labour market, but it is more severe in case of Muslim women. It is a matter of concern that WPR for Muslim women has also shown a declining trend.

Education level-specific WPR has shown that WPR for illiterate or primary educated Muslim women was much lower than other communities indicating poor access to low level jobs by Muslim women. On the other hand, WPR is high in case of women reaching educational level graduation and above. This indicates higher returns to education for Muslim women. Qualified women have much greater labour force participation than average. Inspite of higher returns, the demand for education is not high among Muslim women due to discrimination in entry into regular jobs and restrictions on mobility. This keeps them confined to their homes or even if they work it is low-paying sub-contracted work.

There is huge concentration of Muslim women into low productive self-employment. Within self-employment, they are less engaged in agriculture as compared to non-agricultural activity. Access to regular jobs has been extremely limited for Muslim women due to lack of appropriate opportunities. Most of the self-employed women are concentrated in small businesses and home-based work. Overwhelming majority of Muslim women workers are occupied in the informal sector. They have a dominant presence in the manufacturing sector but are engaged in sub-contractual manufacturing activities involving low skills and less remuneration.

12.2.3 Employment Situation of Muslim Women in Maharashtra

Similar observations have been made regarding employment pursuits of Muslim women in the state of Maharashtra. LFPR and WPR are the lowest for Muslim women among all religious groups and abysmally low in urban areas. Minimal differences between LFPR and WPR have compressed the rates of unemployment.

Studies have shown considerable presence of female agricultural labourers among Muslims. In rural Maharashtra, the share of females in household industries among Muslims is higher than Hindus and more than among males within the community. In urban Maharashtra, most Muslim population is migrant population living in ghettoised centres. Absence of large business in Muslim concentrated areas pushes the males and females into informalization. Though Muslim women possess creativity, they do not have access to artisan industry as it is considered unsuitable for women.

Insecurity and anonymity of city life discourages the women of the community to work outside home and they are concentrated in household industry.

In urban Maharashtra, WPR for Muslim females was highest for the educational level post-graduate and above while in rural Maharashtra, WPR was more for women educated upto primary. But the employment pattern is largely dominated by males.

Employability may be measured through educational level, soft-skills, social networking and orientation of decision-makers/employers. It was found that on all the four criteria, Muslim women lag behind.

Even in the highly urbanized city of Mumbai, WPR for Muslim females is significantly lower than their male counterparts. Majority of Muslim workers, males as well as females have shown very low levels of educational attainment.

12.3 Lessons Drawn from Primary Data

The primary study aims to examine self-employment and entrepreneurship among Muslim women engaged in the manufacturing sector in Mumbai. Large majority of women in the sample ran micro-enterprises. These were primarily engaged in traditional manufacturing businesses. Apart from availability of finance and other facilities, the choice of business was governed by cultural considerations. Products largely demanded by females were produced so that interaction with men is minimal.

12.3.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

Muslim women entrepreneurs usually operate in Muslim dominated areas. Being a ghettoised community, they draw infrastructural, logistical, financial and social support from their own community. Nearly half of the respondents belong to the Bohra community that is known for promotion of entrepreneurship. Though the proportion of Bohras among Muslims in Mumbai is not very high, their representation among entrepreneurs is large. This is primarily due to strong support from the community in entrepreneurial ventures. Bohras are historically traders so Bohra women are continuing their community tradition.

Higher preponderance of entrepreneurship among young Muslim women points towards changing dynamics. It may be assumed they have greater confidence and capacity to undertake risk as the educational level of these entrepreneurs is much above the national average. These women enter manufacturing business after acquiring some skills, which provides the base for their earning activity.

Near universality of marriage in the community could be a reason for higher proportion of married women. Most of them are mothers and have educated husbands providing necessary support. Analysis of gender of children does not show a strong preference for boys. Majority of women live in nuclear families that are considered to be more autonomous and less restrictive in terms of mobility. The average family size is below the national average for Muslim households.

Further analysis on the basis of Type of Products Manufactured revealed the presence of greater proportion of older, less educated women in the manufacture of traditional items that do not require much skills such as food items while young educated women showed higher production and entrepreneurial skills in producing items like Jewellery and Textiles. Provision of education and skills enhances the level of economic activity. In many cases, household conditions are favourable in terms of small nuclear family and educated husbands.

12.3.2 Work Profile

There are not huge differences in the number of own-account workers and employers. It breaks the myth that Muslim women are caught only in low levels of economic activity. Certain employers display characteristics of established entrepreneurs. Most own account workers are more than 40 years of age with low levels of education and are concentrated in the making of Food products while more employers belong to younger age-group, possess education and vocational training and are more involved in the production of sophisticated goods like Textiles and Jewellery. The younger generation of Muslim females are showing signs of economic advancement.

Huge majority of Muslim women entrepreneurs operate from their homes. Among those who work outside home, better educated women and manufacturers of Textiles and Jewellery share a higher percentage.

On an average, less than four hours of work is put in a day, indicating that it is not a full-fledged vocation. Women businesses are regarded as a part-time activities to be undertaken after fulfilling household duties. Statistical analysis on the basis of type of products manufactured has shown that women making food items work for less number of hours as compared to Textile manufacturers.

Asserting the temporary nature of work, data suggests less than five average work days in a week. It reiterates the fact that makers of Food/Perfumes work for less number of days than those who make other products. It suggests that these women spend least amount of time on commercial activities that are considered to be an extension of domestic work.

Regarding employees, it has been found that though Muslim women hire males, the number of female employees is higher than male employees. Women businesses are a major source of employment generation for women and can be an important instrument of inclusiveness. Most women did not have any experience of remunerative work and this was their first attempt into any earning activity. Lesser educated older women were housewives while young more educated were students. Comparatively, textile makers had more experience of working under an employer and then moved out into their own enterprise.

Financial considerations followed by pursuance of interest were the main motivating factors for entry into business. According to different classifications, it was noticed

that higher proportion of manufacturers of Food items, Divorced/ Separated/Widowed women, women beyond 40 years of age and those educated up to secondary level worked mainly for financial purposes.

The most common reason for choosing self-employment over wage-employment is flexibility of work hours followed by autonomy in work and possibility to work from home so that family life and work can be balanced. Further probe shows that greater percentage of manufacturers of food, women between 40-49 years of age, married women, women educated upto higher secondary and graduation prefer self-employment due to flexibility of work hours while more of Textile and Jewellery manufacturers, young women less than 40 years of age, unmarried women and vocationally trained women prefer self-employment due to autonomy in its operation. Divorced/Separated/Widowed women and women more than 50 years choose self-employment due to possibility of work from home. Hence the motivating factors and the reason for self-employment depend upon the distinct features of women entrepreneurs. The level of aspirations among these women is high as 95 per cent want their business to grow.

12.3.3 Income and Expenditure Patterns

Analysis of average monthly family income presents a positive picture. More than 50 per cent of families enjoy income of more than Rs.25000 while less than 10 per cent are low income families. Most of the families are APL families. It may be assumed that financially sound are expected to be socially more progressive. Women's

education is encouraged and they are allowed to explore possibilities of earning based on their interest. As discussed above, interest in work was a common motivational factor, especially for comparatively younger and more educated women.

Statistical analysis of average family income on the basis of type of products manufactured reveals that the average monthly family income of women making Foods/Perfume and Articles/Footwear is less than that of women manufacturing products like Textiles and Jewellery. It hints at the fact that choice of products to be manufactured is influenced by the level of family income.

There is a marked difference between family income and personal income of women entrepreneurs where half of the women respondents are earning less than Rs.5000. Earlier studies have shown that women-owned businesses are less remunerative. As seen above, it is mostly carried as a part-time activity. Household and child-care responsibilities take priority and women are constrained by time and resources. According to type of products manufactured, it is seen that manufacturers of Textiles earn the most, followed by Jewellery makers, producers of Articles/Footwear and lastly, those who make Foods/Perfume. The type of product manufactured has a bearing on the income levels.

The levels of family income and personal income determine contribution to total family income. Women from poorer households make large contributions to family income. 21 per cent women contributed to more than 80 per cent of total family

income hinting at absence of any other source of income. 20 per cent women contributed to less than 20 per cent of total family income indicating economic stability of their families. Type of products manufactured has an effect on contribution to family income. It is observed that women making Foods/Perfume make larger contributions to family income rather than Textile manufacturers. It may be inferred that women making food products from home generally come from poorer families and do so out of dire necessity. These are self-employed women operating at subsistence level.

The average personal income levels are low since 50 per cent of women earn less than Rs. 5000 per month. Low income has a depressing effect on savings. 25 per cent of respondents reported zero savings. Even though family incomes are high, women are required to spend out of their personal incomes. According to type of product manufactured, it is observed that savings levels are highest for Textile manufacturers, followed by Jewellery makers, then producers of Articles/Footwear and lastly those making Foods/Perfume.

Low savings can also be attributed to higher spending. Women are required to make large contributions to household expenditure. 17 per cent of women who spent their entire income probably earn due to financial necessity. But in the present study their number is less than those who do not spend on household expenses at all. Women not spending on household are likely to belong to financially stable households who have taken up enterprise to pursue their interest.

Further analysis revealed that women making Foods/Perfume and Articles/Footwear spend larger percentage of their incomes on household expenses than those manufacturing Textiles/Jewellery. Makers of Foods/Perfume exhibit characteristics of economically poor women. Though personal income levels are low, contributions to total family income are high. Large proportion of income is spent on household expenses thereby depressing savings. They are caught in a vicious circle- low income-low investment-manufacturing of low value goods-low returns.

12.3.4 Issues in Business

Technology

Almost 60 per cent of women reported the use of technology. Most of them were manufacturers of Textiles. Makers of Articles/Footwear and Foods/Perfume do not make much use of technology. The nature of business activity in case of such products does not warrant technological use. Information Technology is the most common type of technology used by entrepreneurs to contact their customers.

Use of technology in the process of production is very limited. It is largely used for marketing purposes. Expectedly, young, educated and vocationally trained women make greater use of technology than elderly, less educated women. The most common reason given for not using technology is that it is not required; meaning the scope of manufacturing is too limited to accommodate technological use.

75 per cent of women financed their business through personal savings. In case of loans taken, it was from informal sources. Formal credit was negligible. Analysis on the basis of type of products manufactured revealed that higher proportion of makers of Foods/Perfume, Articles/Footwear have used personal savings while Textile and Jewellery manufacturers have mainly tapped funds from informal sources of credit. As per age group, younger women accessed informal credit sources more than older women.

Among the various sources of informal credit, loans taken from own family members were most prevalent followed by credit from friends. These loans are interest-free. Certain community based organizations also provide interest free loans to promote entrepreneurship in the community.

It is generally believed that informal sources of credit, consisting of moneylenders, carry high rates of interest. In case of self-employed Muslim women, informal credit comes without any interest obligations. It curtails their cost of production and makes it possible to supply the products at low prices in the market. Competitive pricing is their main survival strategy. Interest based loans would escalate costs, erode the thin profit margin and adversely affect market demand.

Since Muslims live as a ghettoised community, there is easy availability of informal loans. The long cumbersome procedures to avail formal finance acted as a deterrent.

They are diffident to approach financial institutions. Interviews with respondents revealed that interest dealings are prohibited in the community and hence they are unwilling to approach formal institutions of credit.

Among those who borrowed money, percentage of Separated/Divorced/Widowed women and those women who are less educated is high. Analysis of the purpose of borrowing money revealed that these women primarily borrowed money for production rather than for consumption.

Majority agreed with the view that being a woman is a constraint in getting formal finance. The most common constraint is lack of knowledge about accessing formal finance. Heavy interest rates, providing collateral for loans, cumbersome loan procedures and cultural barriers were some of the other constraints mentioned in availing formal finance.

Due to limited access to finance, expansion of business either does not take place or takes place at a slow pace. In one of the case studies, a successful entrepreneur tapped equity financing that gave boost to her business and caused tremendous growth in a short period of time. Access of Muslims to formal credit is poor. Studies have shown that only about 6 per cent of Muslim households in urban Maharashtra are able to avail credit from Banks/Co-operatives (MSMC, 2013). The situation becomes much worse for Muslim women.

Sales and Marketing

An important feature of Muslim women owned businesses is that sales and marketing take place from home. The most common method of obtaining order for their products is through social contacts and word of mouth publicity. Some of them take part in fairs and exhibitions and few use social networking sites as well. According to type of products manufactured, more women making Foods/Perfume depend on word of mouth publicity while higher proportions of Textile manufacturers participate in fairs and exhibitions. More young unmarried women make use of social networking as compared to older women who depend on word of mouth publicity.

Not many women agreed to facing constraints in getting order as a woman. This is primarily due to limited production and known customers. But these factors retard business development. The most frequently cited constraint in getting order is overdependence on limited social contacts for sales. Restriction on mobility, compulsion to carry business from home, lack of access to retail outlets or formal advertising, physical strain, unaffordability to hire a sales team and social expectations constrain Muslim businesswomen to get orders. These constraints become more pronounced for less educated women.

Most women delivered products themselves to the market or sold from home. Few hired marketing staff. All women making Foods/Perfume either delivered the products to the market themselves or sold from home. Greater proportion of Textile and Jewellery manufacturers hire marketing staff.

95 per cent of Muslim women manufacturers supply only to local markets. They may have customers in other places but these are very small in number. Most of the marketing is managed by self. Education-wise analysis shows that higher proportion of less educated women manage marketing themselves while more of vocationally trained women use intermediaries and retailers to market their product.

Similarly, 95 per cent of women sell in the same market due to many marketing constraints they face. A major marketing constraint is the prevalence of huge competition. Difficulty in reaching buyers, small size of the market due to targeted customers, limited resources to advertise/market the product, restrictions on mobility, keeping abreast of changing trends and fashions and seasonal demand are some of the other marketing woes. In order to face the challenges of a competitive market and retain demand, these home-based entrepreneurs attempt to supply good quality products at reasonable prices.

Health

Almost half of the respondents complained of health problems. Earning activity, along with household and child-care responsibilities, adversely affects women's health.

12.3.5 Role of Family and Culture

Business and Family

Around 70 per cent of women were the first to initiate entrepreneurship/self-employment activities in the family. 30 per cent claimed the presence of other self-employed women. Among these, more were Textile manufacturers, mainly belonging to the younger age-group. Higher proportion of educated and vocationally trained women have reported the presence of other self-employed women in the family. It may be assumed that the progressive families educate and train women and promote entrepreneurship among them. The presence of other working women in the family reported by 44 per cent of respondents presents a positive picture.

It is asserted by that the fact that 92 per cent of women declared that their families have been supportive. This support was provided in various ways such as reducing the burden of household work, helping in the manufacturing and sale of commercial products, providing encouragement and moral support, extending financial help and business training and sharing child-care responsibilities. More Textile Manufacturers and those who were unmarried claimed to have received financial help from their families. Hindrances from family include household and child-care responsibilities and lack of permission to work.

Concomitantly, women felt that their work has positively affected their family life. It has enhanced total family income, improved standard of living, demands of children can be met more easily than before. In some cases, it provided a source of

employment to other family members. According to marital status, higher proportions of married women have reported a positive effect of work on family life.

It is also observed that Muslim women business owners make substantial contributions to family income. Their purpose of starting business is financial independence and raising the living standards of the family. Since the family is benefited by their income, they enjoy familial support. Women are very dependent on the support of their family members for success in business.

An analysis of the profile of self-employed Muslim women in business reveals that the various features of a family play an important role in the economic pursuits of a woman. Most of the women are young, in the child-bearing age showing greater commitment to family responsibilities. The level of educational attainment of these women is not low but they choose to undertake their own business due to flexibility of work hours. They choose that kind of employment in which household duties are not compromised. Majority of women are married and take up work to support their growing families. Their husbands are also educated enough to grant them the autonomy to pursue their own interests. A large number of these businesswomen come from nuclear families which gives them the autonomy to take up economic activities of their choice without much interference of other family members. The average size of the families is small implying lesser domestic responsibilities so that the women can concentrate on their business. The number of children is less. Most of the self-employed women have daughters who assist them in their commercial activities and are also a motivating force for their mothers.

Families are also an important source of informal credit for women-owned businesses in the Muslim community. Most of the businesses are self-financed or sponsored by their family members. Loans taken from family carry no interest and constitute cheap source of funds. It helps in minimizing costs and helps them sustain competition in the market.

Socio-cultural Influences

Socio-cultural factors exert influence on business activities of women. Most Muslim women asserted that they had received support from within the household and community, and in fact would not have become entrepreneurs without this support. However, some barriers do exist, including restrictions on mobility, social stigma, patriarchal attitude and under-estimation of women's capabilities. The most common method suggested for removing barriers is attitudinal changes through education. Education to be made common and awareness about women's rights has to be created. The women opined that measures such as women's safety and community support will reduce the barriers to women's work.

The most frequently cited positive factor that contributes to women working in a Muslim household is encouragement to business. Community support, liberal attitude and inherited creativity are other positive factors contributing to women's work.

Huge majority of women entrepreneurs believed that their work improved their social image. Not even a single respondent held that their social image had worsened.

Women manufacturing Foods/Perfume reported that their image remained the same while Textile/Jewellery makers opined that their image has improved.

Mostly Muslim women heard positive comments from society and claimed that people in their society were appreciative of their work. Their hard-work, financial independence, ability to financially support family, creativity, ability to balance work and family brought positive comments from society. Some even enjoyed admiration by people around. Conversely, very few women reported any negative comments. Neglect of family and household, working against family traditions and culture, work is unnecessary if husband is earning well, women need not engage in commercial activities were some factors that brought negative comments from society.

On changes in the attitude of society about working women, majority of them opined that it has improved. Only a few less educated women, women manufacturing Foods/Perfume were of the opinion that society's attitude about working women has not improved.

The predominant work issue, more specific to women rather than men, is household responsibilities. Restrictions on mobility, male-domination, time constraint as it is to be divided between work and family, difficulty in extracting work from male employees, physical strain, condition of home-based work, limited access to finance, opposition from family and society and social stigma were certain women-specific work issues mentioned by respondents.

12.3.6 Effectiveness of Governmental and Non-Governmental Assistance

The existence of various agencies to assist self-employment ventures among Muslim women has not been very effective. 95 per cent of women in the sample denied receiving help from any Government or private agency. The level of awareness regarding external assistance is very poor.

Concomitantly, hardly any women are members of any association. Studies have shown that women entrepreneurs, in general, are largely a class of unorganized workers operating in the informal sector. Lack of organization reduces their bargaining power and increases vulnerability in the market. This has a depressing effect on their earnings. In case of Muslim women, community based organizations are working towards the promotion of entrepreneurship as it is the most desired vocation in the community. But unless backed by financial support, these enterprises will remain at subsistence level.

Central and State Governments have devised several schemes to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship among women. Certain measures are specifically targeted towards Muslim women. But the level of awareness is negligible. Moreover, women belonging to BPL (Below Poverty Line) families are expected to be its beneficiaries; as mentioned in the eligibility criteria. Such schemes cannot be availed by women from middle-class and upper class families. Entrepreneurship among women should not be merely treated as a tool for poverty alleviation/reduction but also as a measure of high economic growth, utilizing the capacities of largely

untapped resources of the country-its female labour. Women-owned businesses contribute to the creation of new jobs (especially for women) and develop their own distinctive styles of management and networking.

At present, the outreach of various Government institutions is poor and many Muslim women do not know the kind of services they offer. The same is true for various women's business forums and associations.

On asking regarding the kind of help they desired most from the Government, majority of women wanted business development services (opportunity identification), followed by reduced cost of inputs. Higher proportion of young educated women wanted business development services as compared to older and less educated women. The most common response regarding the kind of help expected from donors was help in marketing followed by financial help and then assistance in building networks. Again the percentage of young, educated and Textile manufacturers want donors to help in marketing as compared to older, less educated women and more women making Foods/Perfume seek financial assistance. Business women face huge challenges in selling their products and expanding their customer base. Government and private donors are expected to assist them in this area of business. Support with marketing, finance and networking come out as major demands of women entrepreneurs.

Regarding the issue of discrimination, very few claimed that they had experienced discrimination, which was mainly due to absence of Government agencies in Muslim localities and non-availability of finance. Large number of women was unable to comment on the subject of discrimination due to the closed nature of their home-based enterprise. They live in ghettoised communities with minimalist interaction with members of other communities.

12.4 Causes of Predominance of Small Businesses among Muslim Women

The current study on Muslim women in manufacturing in the city of Mumbai has brought out that these women prefer self-employment scope due to following reasons:

1. Lack of education
2. Cultural constraints
3. Ghettoization and poor availability of facilities in Muslim dominated areas
4. Patriarchal attitude wherein preference is given to the male child
5. Discrimination that limits access to gainful employment
6. Social barriers to mobility
7. Hostile atmosphere in market place
8. Stigma to women's work
9. Low physical safety

The scope of businesses run by these women is quite limited. However, in success stories the women have been able to break the glass ceiling and earn more. The push has been provided by the family in terms of finance, education, skills and the liberty

to work. They are not stuck in the manufacture of low value goods. Their education has facilitated the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and expansion of their markets. Such women become role models and a source of inspiration for others.

12.5 Recommendations

In the backdrop of the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are made for addressing the several issues concerning self-employment among Muslim women in manufacturing. The current study is concentrated on the urban self-employed in the manufacturing sector. Many issues confronted by this section of the work-force are part of the larger problems. Hence, a set of recommendations is made keeping the larger concerns in mind.

12.5.1. Increase in Capabilities of Women

Education

Low level of education is one of the main reasons for economic backwardness of Muslim women. Their level of educational attainment is lower than women belonging to other communities. Continued and higher education is required for substantive improvement in status. The more educated women in the sample are able to earn higher incomes.

Professional Training

Apart from general education, women carrying out business should acquire specialized training in various aspects of business. A degree in business administration and management would be very useful. Women entrepreneurs can be given training in accountancy practices. Training can be helpful to women to overcome their tendency to select traditional businesses and hesitation in learning technology. The scope of marketing can be expanded.

Skills Up-gradation

Specialized skills are required to enter the manufacturing sector. Low level of skills will confine women to production of low value goods generating low returns. In order to improve productivity and incomes, acquisition of skills is essential. It is seen in the sample study that skilled women are able to extract higher profits from their enterprise. A crucial element in improving the economic status of Muslims, gaining entry into coveted regular jobs and improving productivity and incomes in self-employment is acquisition of basic education and new technical skills. There is a need to link skill development organizations with entrepreneurship development agencies for effective interventions.

Occupational Safety

Employed women share the twin responsibility of managing home and work. This may take a heavy toll on their health. Measures like proper nutrition, exercise and rest

are essential to keep good health so that they are able to face the growing pressures of business.

12.5.2. Business Acumen and Information

Create a vision

The widespread illiteracy and ghettoisation of the Muslim community has retarded the growth of its members. Women perceive themselves according to traditional gender stereotypes. Most of them lack vision and sense of direction. Awareness has to be created about the multiple roles they can play in society.

Realize the importance of economic independence

Women in general and Muslim women in particular are highly dependent upon males in the household for their economic needs thereby reducing their status in the family and society. It is imperative that women attempt to search for sources of earnings that reduce their economic vulnerability.

Prioritize business activities

Women's business activities are not given much importance in the household and are regarded as secondary. As a result, women are unable to devote much time and effort towards its expansion. For achieving success in enterprise, it is important that women prioritize their commercial activities and work sincerely towards it.

Product Development

Women engaged in manufacturing have to take utmost care of the quality of products. The kind of raw-material used, efficacy of labour needs to be checked before supplying in the competitive market. Women entrepreneurs in manufacturing can survive in the market on the basis of product development.

Variety in Production

It has been found in the study that Muslim women manufacturers made products for the use of women primarily from their own community, restricting the size of the market. Women entrepreneurs need to bring in variety in production so that the demands of various types of customers are met.

Increased use of Technology

Use of technology is indispensable for growth in the manufacturing sector. It plays a dominant role in production and sale of goods. Though majority of Muslim women owned businesses are traditional in nature, technology can play an important role in the marketing of products. With the use of social networking sites, virtual markets and cell phone applications, customers can be contacted. Women should be trained in the use of Information and Communication Technology.

Participate in Non-conventional Businesses

There is a huge concentration of Muslim women in traditional businesses such as manufacturing of food items, handicrafts and ladies garments. In many cases the low value goods generate low returns holding the business at subsistence level. By tapping sources of finance, women should venture into non-conventional business with huge potential for growth.

Supply of raw-materials and inputs

Women entrepreneurs in manufacturing need to have easy access to supply of good quality raw-materials and inputs, very essential for quality products. Women should be in touch with the supply networks of these goods.

Virtual Information Hub

Use of Information Technology in business has been reported by women in the study. Websites may be created that will help female entrepreneurs in getting general business information, improved market access and enhanced networking. Various Government and private sector institutions can also expand their outreach through virtual sources.

12.5.3. Finance

Equity Financing

Since Muslim women entrepreneurs have expressed an aversion to interest based loans, equity financing can be used as an option to avail funds for business. Investments may be invited by others on a profit sharing basis.

Right to inheritance

Muslim women enjoy right to inheritance in the property of their father, husband, unmarried brother and son as per the Islamic law. But though women legally have a right to ownership, it is denied at family and community level. Awareness has to be created among women regarding this right. If distributed honestly, inherited money can become a vital source of asset for women's business.

Availability of Community-based funds

Muslim women's specific demand for interest-free loans is difficult to be met by formal financial institutions. In this context, community-based funds can play an important role. The concept of paying obligatory charity, Zakat in a collective system should be encouraged. This money can be utilized for financing self-employment schemes. Among Bohras, entrepreneurs are sometimes given interest free loans from community funds known as Karz-e-Hasana; this practice can be emulated by other sects.

Women-only banks

Another reason for exclusion of Muslim women from formal financial institutions is their diffidence to interact with men. They will be comfortable transacting with women-only banks. Moreover, such banks are likely to be more sensitive to the concerns of women.

Micro-finance and Self-Help Groups

Self-help groups consisting of micro-entrepreneurs having similar social and economic backgrounds should be encouraged. The members in the group may come together voluntarily to save regular small sums of money. They pool their resources to become financially stable. They take loans from the money collected by the group. These loans can be taken for self-employment activities on profit-sharing basis. Peer pressure may ensure proper use of money and its timely repayment.

Financial literacy

Financial literacy is the knowledge regarding financial transactions. It is the ability that allows an individual to take correct decisions with their financial resources. Muslim women lack financial literacy due to their restrictive environment and micro level of entrepreneurial activity. Adequate knowledge of financial issues will facilitate commercial advancement.

12.5.4. Marketing

Marketing networks

A major question before Muslim women manufacturers is how to sell. Hence, many women in manufacturing carry sub-contracted work. Micro-entrepreneurs sell their products mainly through social contacts. It is necessary to provide avenues for selling by establishing sales and marketing centres. Such centres at prime locations should be exclusively allotted to individual and group entrepreneurs.

Marketing Assistance/Services

Marketing Services include arranging exclusive exhibitions/fairs where women can sell their products. Facilities for exhibitions of products of women entrepreneurs should be available at nominal charges. Organizing special Sunday markets (weekly bazaar) could be an option. Assistance can be provided to expand market from local to national to international.

Linkages with formal retail outlets

Muslim women manufacturers should acquire requisite licences and establish linkages with formal retail outlets to expand sales.

Elimination of middlemen

Lack of direct access to market compels women manufacturers to hand-over their products to middlemen/agents at very low prices. Adequate marketing assistance would help in the elimination of middlemen and enable sales at remunerative prices. Government itself can provide marketing facilities to women as it makes extensive purchase of goods and services which could be supplied by women.

12.5.5. Networking

Women's Co-operatives/Associations

Representation of Muslim women in co-operatives should be encouraged to realize their potential for development. Membership of co-operatives provides benefit to manufacturers such as gaining of new skills and talent, availability of raw-materials, access to markets and better returns through collective bargaining. It will position them better to benefit from welfare schemes of the Government. Organization and bargaining is advantageous even for self-employed women. The aim is to empower them and bring them into the mainstream of national development.

Increased interaction with members of other communities

The ghettoised living of the community keeps women isolated from the outside world. Interaction with members of other communities will provide greater exposure to Muslim women entrepreneurs, aid the process of social development, enhance their

knowledge and customer base and assist in eliminating the secluded nature of their work.

Business Forums for women entrepreneurs

Since networking is important for businesses to grow, Business Forums for women entrepreneurs should be established. It would provide a platform for discussion, co-ordination and resolution of issues. It may become part of strategies for making business women visible.

Synchronization between men and women forums

Several concerns of men and women entrepreneurs are similar. Increased interaction between men and women business forums would be advantageous to businesswomen. Creating role models by inviting successful women, especially from the Muslim community, who have crossed the glass ceiling and achieved success, may be invited to share their experiences with other potential entrepreneurs. Since there is scarcity of role models, these women may act as mentors and role models stimulating the rest to emulate. They can help the new entrants by providing knowledge as well as internship. Entrepreneurship as a career may be encouraged.

12.5.6. Family and Society

Change in societal attitude

Change in society's attitude towards women's commercial activity is desired. A progressive attitude needs to be developed that recognizes women as economic

agents. Universalization of education would play a vital role in bringing about attitudinal changes and creating awareness regarding the contribution of women's work.

Support system

Women entrepreneurs are faced with the challenge of balancing family and work. Business activities can demand more of their time and they need to rely on support system provided primarily by family members. Sharing of household and child-care responsibilities are supportive factors that facilitate outside work.

Weapon against backwardness

Muslim community has been designated as a socially and economically backward community in India. The women in the community largely remain out of the labour force. Women entrepreneurship may be propagated as a weapon against economic backwardness.

Autonomy

Autonomy can be gauged by freedom of movement and capacity to take decisions independently. Self-employed women in the study expressed that expansion of business was hindered by restrictions on mobility. Society must grant autonomy to women to pursue their business activities.

12.5.7 Private Agencies

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs are in constant touch with the people and play an important role in supplementing the developmental efforts of the government. Their existence helps in increasing the effectiveness of various programmes aimed at women and at the minorities. Many more such voluntary organizations should be set up in Muslim dominated areas. Government should provide support to these organizations through financial assistance.

Community-based support organizations

Seclusion of Muslim women from mainstream requires certain internal support systems. Apart from providing funds, community based organizations can provide logistical and moral support to entrepreneurship. Such organizations are more aware of the specific problems and needs of women in their community and can extend services in accordance with demand.

Role of Media

It has been noticed that press coverage given to women-owned businesses in general is very limited as these are considered to be small and relatively unimportant. Media should highlight the capabilities of potential entrepreneurs and the unique advantages women owners possess. The various concerns of Muslim women business owners should be brought out to provide visibility to their work.

Corporate sector

Corporate sector can play an important role in providing impetus to women entrepreneurship. Guidance may be provided by conducting training sessions for women business owners. Corporates may hire women owned firms to outsource work.

12.5.8. Government Measures

Infrastructure

Proper infrastructural facilities are important for growth in women's business. The role of the Government in providing infrastructure cannot be denied. It may include supply of electricity, transport and communication facilities, establishment of training-cum-production centres, financial arrangement, etc. It will lead to reduction in cost, saving of time and expansion of scope of business.

Awareness about Government schemes

Through the 15-point programme, some select schemes were devised for the minorities. The Government proposes to develop skills of these people so that they can start their own enterprise. But the provisions of welfare are not utilized because women are ignorant about it. Hardly any women in the study were aware of the existence of any welfare schemes. Awareness of such schemes needs to be created among the deserving population. Brochures giving detailed information on schemes and incentives should be made available.

Comprehensive data-base of women entrepreneurship

There is lack of record on the number of women entrepreneurs, their profile and the nature of businesses pursued by them. Government agencies need to create a comprehensive data-base at the national level on women businesses that would serve as a reference point in policy making.

Increased representation of Muslim women in political process and economic federations as such, the representation of women in India's political system is poor and in case of Muslim women it is negligible. As a result, the issues of this section of population do not receive any attention. It is essential for women to become part of political organizations and economic federations to highlight their concerns and assert their rights.

Gender audit of State channelizing agencies

State Channelizing Agencies are responsible for implementing the welfare schemes of the government. A gendered analysis of its beneficiaries is required to know the effectiveness of these schemes in the upliftment of women.

Subsidized child-care facilities

Government should attempt to provide child-care facilities at subsidized rates for working women. Though private child-care facilities are available, these are very

costly and remain unaffordable to many. It acts as one of the main deterring factors keeping women away from work.

Monitoring of Government schemes

Though the Government of India has devised several schemes directed towards the growth and socio-economic development of women in general, its implementation is lacking. Government, at the central as well as local level, have earmarked quotas for women. But research studies have found that the effect of these programmes on women has not been very encouraging and improvements in their condition have been marginal. Moreover, the effectiveness of these schemes on the betterment of women from the minority communities has been dismal. The Government should set up bodies to monitor the implementation and inclusiveness of its schemes. There is a crucial need for ongoing monitoring of policy implementation so that corrective measures to increase the effectiveness of the policy can be taken accordingly.

Collaboration between Government and NGOs

Lack of co-ordination between various support agencies may prove to be detrimental to the entrepreneur and her enterprise. The effectiveness of the developmental efforts of the government can be enhanced through collaboration between Government and NGOs. As mentioned above, the proper implementation of Government schemes is lacking and requires improvement. Non-Government Organizations, aware of local needs and problems, may be used for this purpose. These may serve as a link between government and the deserving population.

The above mentioned measures will help realize the potentiality of a large section of Indian population, transforming them into a dynamic labour force that would make contributions to the national economy.

12.6 Conclusion

The concentration of Muslim women in the informal sector and their exclusion from public sector employment deprives them of the benefits of employment generation programmes. The creativity of these women can be tapped by the manufacturing sector that is less unequal and more labour intensive. State interventions in the acquisition of education and technical skills are required so that it enhances the quality of their employment, improves productivity and provides visibility to their work.

India cannot achieve progress without the co-operation and mutual assistance of its various communities. This co-operation can be possible and mutually beneficial when all communities are more or less economically equal. Muslim women who are doubly disadvantaged – being women and belonging to the minority community – constitute a large group in the lowest economic categories. An integrated approach is required to improve their employment quantitatively and qualitatively in order to develop their full potential and to participate in society as equal and empowered citizens.