

Obstacles Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in the use of ICTs

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ABSTRACT: ICTs are rapidly changing the global scenario, they are becoming a necessary tool for running a competitive business. ICTs facilitated the entry of women into entrepreneurship by allowing them to shift from home-based to office-based, and by opening up online networking opportunities. Women are getting more opportunities in business, but they are also facing challenges. The present study was aimed at studying the difficulties or obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in the use of ICTs. A total of 180 respondents were selected for the study from Adilabad, Sangareddy and Rangareddy districts of Telangana state. The findings revealed that the high cost of ICTs, a lack of time, frequent changes in ICTs, a lack of training, and a lack of knowledge on the importance of ICTs were the major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in using ICTs. The findings of the research paper are useful for framing policies that are beneficial to women entrepreneurs.

Keywords: ICTs, women entrepreneurs, challenges and problems, business and information technology.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication Technologies have opened new doors to women entrepreneurs in finding new business opportunities to start and grow business. The ICTs are emerging as necessary business tools for running a competitive business for women entrepreneurs in developing countries. In recent years, high-speed internet and digital marketing have made working at home a reality for millions of people around the world (Seth, 2021). ICT includes all digital technologies that assist individuals, businesses and organizations in using information. It covers all electronic products that deal with information in a digital form. ICT makes a business more efficient, effective and promptly respond to customers needs. ICT can assist business activities including design, manufacturing, distribution and sales and feedback. ICTs decrease the face to face communication and results in greater dispersion of economic activity.

ICTs specifically mobile phones, computers and the internet have become a vital to develop enterprises and

boost competitiveness among entrepreneurs. Specially, high penetration of cell phones in developing countries and the increased affordability of internet offerings have introduced approximately unheard of possibilities for people to leverage those technologies to start and develop enterprises. The usage of ICTs in enterprise management makes entrepreneurs to make updated and able to cope with current trends and developments of society. ICTs are helping women to gain better status and excel professionally in their society. Traditional and new ICTs, are offering new opportunities to the women entrepreneurs to start and grow enterprises easily despite society-centered cultural, financial and educational constraints (Motilewa *et al.*, 2015). If women are given encouragement and necessary assistance, they are capable of developing own sustainable businesses (Singh, 2020). Mpofu *et al.* (2013) found that internet; websites; fixed-line and mobile phone networks as the most common technologies adopted by SMEs to support their e-business operations. In 2006, Department of Electronics

and Information Technology (DeitY) had setup sufficient infrastructure under National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) to setup over one lakh Common Service Centers (CSC) across the country. The scheme gives entrepreneur opportunities for women in both Urban and Rural areas. Despite this, many rural women entrepreneurs face challenges when it comes to using ICTs. This situation may be due to insufficient information, a low educational profile, poor infrastructure facilities, and the high cost of ICT tools. The present study was aimed at studying the difficulties or obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in the use of ICTs.

METHODOLOGY

An ex post-facto research design was used for the study. A total of 180 respondents from three districts *i.e.* Adilabad, Sangareddy and Rangareddy were selected for the study from Telangana state. From each district 60 respondents selected. The data were collected by personal interview method with the help of a structured schedule. The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16.0 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 exhibits the various obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in acquiring information through ICTs. It was observed that in Adilabad district, majority (68.33%) of the respondents expressed that “High cost of ICT tools” as major problem faced by them. The

other problems faced by them were lack of time spent on ICTs (65.00%), frequent changes in ICTs (56.67%), lack of training in using ICTs (55.00%), lack of knowledge on importance of ICT (53.33%), lack of confidence in using ICTs (48.33%), have no need to use ICTs (45.00%), language problem (38.33%), network connection & electricity problem (31.67%) and discouragement from people to use ICT tools (26.67%). Similarly in Sangareddy district it was found that, majority (63.33%) of the women entrepreneurs stated that ICT tools were expensive, followed by lack of time spent on ICTs (53.33%), frequent changes in ICTs (48.33%), lack of knowledge on importance of ICT (46.67%), lack of training in using ICTs (43.33%), lack of confidence in using ICTs (40.00%), have no need to use ICTs (38.33%), language problem (28.33%), network connection & electricity problem (26.67%) and discouragement from people to use ICT tools (23.33%) as the problems faced by women entrepreneurs.

Further in Rangareddy district, majority of the respondents identified that ICT tools were expensive (53.33%), followed by lack of time spent on ICTs (38.33%), lack of training in using ICTs (35.00%), frequent changes in ICTs (33.33%), lack of confidence in using ICTs (26.67%), lack of knowledge on importance of ICT (23.33%), have no need to use ICTs (21.67%), language problem (20.00%), network connection & electricity problem (18.33%) and discouragement from people to use ICT tools (16.67%) were the major problem faced by women entrepreneurs.

Table 1: Obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in the use of ICTs.

Obstacles/Challenges	Adilabad (n1=60)		Sangareddy (n2=60)		Rangareddy (n3=60)		Total (n=180)	
	F (%)	R	F (%)	R	F (%)	R	F (%)	R
Lack of time spent on ICT	39 (65.00)	II	32 (53.33)	II	23 (38.33)	II	94 (52.22)	II
Lack of training on ICT usage	33 (55.00)	IV	26 (43.33)	V	21 (35.00)	V	79 (43.89)	IV
High cost of ICT tools	41 (68.33)	I	38 (63.33)	I	32 (53.33)	I	111 (61.67)	I
Language problem	23 (38.33)	VIII	17 (28.33)	VIII	12 (20.00)	VIII	52 (28.89)	VIII
Have no need to use ICT	27 (45.00)	VII	23 (38.33)	VII	13 (21.67)	VII	63 (35.00)	VII
Lack of confidence in using ICT	29 (48.33)	VI	24 (40.00)	VI	16 (26.67)	V	69 (38.33)	VI
Lack of knowledge on importance of ICT	32 (53.33)	V	28 (46.67)	IV	14 (23.33)	VI	74 (41.11)	V
Frequent changes in ICT	34 (56.67)	III	29 (48.33)	III	20 (33.33)	IV	83 (46.11)	III
Network connection or electricity problem	19 (31.67)	IX	16 (26.67)	IX	10 (18.33)	IX	46 (25.56)	IX
Discouragement from people to use ICT tools	16 (26.67)	X	14 (23.33)	X	11 (16.67)	X	40 (22.22)	X

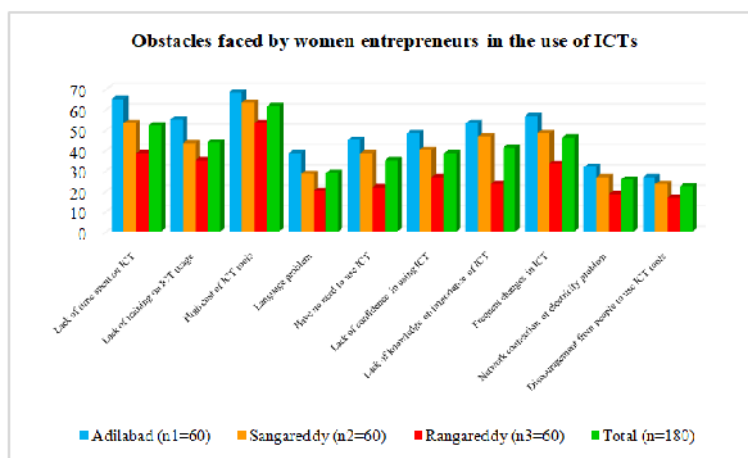


Fig. 1. Obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in the use of ICTs.

Considering the total population, it was recorded that majority (61.67%) of the respondents expressed that ICT tools were expensive to use, followed by lack of time spent on ICTs (52.22%), frequent changes in ICTs (46.11%), lack of training in using ICTs (43.89%), lack of knowledge on importance of ICT (41.11%), lack of confidence in using ICTs (38.33%), have no need to use ICTs (35.00%), language problem (28.89%), network connection & electricity problem (25.56%) and discouragement from people to use ICT tools (22.22%). Hassan *et al.* (2009) identified major problems faced by Malaysia agro-based entrepreneurs in using ICT were they do not know the benefits of using ICT, have no skill in using ICT, lack of time spent in using ICT and have no ICT knowledge. Joshi *et al.* (2017) identified lack of awareness, education, poor electricity & network connections, poverty, geographical isolation, poor infrastructure, lack of government policies as the major challenges for ICTs in Uttarakhand.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that, high cost of ICTs, lack of time, frequent changes in ICTs, lack of training, lack of knowledge on importance of ICTs were the major obstacles or challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. The reasons might be that low socio-economic conditions, negligence to use ICT tools, absence of knowledge on the internet and technology. Because of socio-economic conditions, women did not afforded to use such technology, they do not have access and some people do not know basic technical knowledge. Low level of education can also be a reason behind low awareness and low knowledge of ICTs. Hence it could

be concluded that ICT training, ICT promotion, ICT courses should be increased to encourage women entrepreneurs to overcome these problems. ICT applications should be created in local languages to solve the problems in using ICTs. Technical empowerment can be achieved through the success of using ICTs.

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