

Innovation & Creativity: The Case of Women Entrepreneurs in Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa

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The purpose of this research paper is to shed light on the sense of deprivation and the steps needed to bring in creativity among women entrepreneurs who own small and medium size businesses in KP. Group discussions were conducted with 200 women entrepreneurs over a period of 4 weeks and data was compiled using questionnaires based on both qualitative and quantitative approach. The study proposes that women entrepreneurs of KP are in dire need of counseling and capacity building measures. Workshops, seminars & trainings should be arranged to bring out creativity and innovation among those living in these challenging situations.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Creativity, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa.

1. Introduction

Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (KP) is a war-stricken and tormented province of Pakistan. To add to these woes, entrepreneurship is considered to be a male dominated field in a patriarchal Pakistan. This is problematic because the process of development and economic prosperity requires equal participation from all citizens regardless of gender. Overall, females comprise of 55 percent of the country's population and most of them are conventionally involved in work related to household chores. If given the appropriate opportunities and social mobility, they can play a tremendous role in the development of the economic growth of the country. According to statistics only 16 % out of 55 % are involved in the economic activities while 3% of this 16% belong to KP. At the grass root level, innovations can benefit women simply by improving well-being in terms of health, nutrition, income and even increase their life span. Beyond vital improvements, innovations can also lead to women empowerment, securing freedom and resources for women to make important decisions and enabling them to act in their own interests.

Innovation and creativity is an imperative driving force behind economic growth. Fresh entrepreneurs pose a challenge to the existing ones by questioning and evolving the status quo. The urge to improve products and services should always be given priority in a competitive market. In the economic cycle of economic natural selection, only the fittest can survive.

Although the government of Pakistan and NGOs are working on various projects to empower the women entrepreneurs, the work being done is not adequate for the province of KP. The major fault in these projects is that they are not keeping the record of women entrepreneurs nor are they tracking their successes or failures. Most women are not able to pursue their ambitions because of the pressures of a competitive market. Women in large numbers are exercising their rights and duties but within the zone of their limits sketched by society.

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The proposed work is an attempt to understand and explore the actual status of the empowerment of women in KP, to highlight the issues and challenges and assess the need for innovation and creativity for successful establishment and continuity of respective businesses.

The significance of this study lies in the point that it compiles the responses of 200 women entrepreneurs of KP and state their congruent demands as a possible need for entrepreneurial growth in the region. After in-depth statistically significant research, the following major issue of women entrepreneurs of KP was addressed:

- What is the importance & need of training programs for women entrepreneurs of KP to innovate, create and launch, a new product for the market?

The objective of this research paper is to examine and uncover contemporary management issues of women entrepreneurs to motivate women entrepreneurs to actively pursue this field in innovative manners.

The research involved in this study contains data from rigorous interviews of 200 women entrepreneurs who belong to the different areas of the province Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa. This is particularly important since there is no previous study available conducted on such a broad spectrum which highlights the main problems of women entrepreneurs of KP.

The elementary barriers and urge to be innovative & creative for women entrepreneurs in KP is discussed in the paper. Additionally, the accumulation of this research was conducted keeping in mind the existing literature and will be followed by the future researchers. The study also recommends the necessary support for women entrepreneurs. Their creative and innovative entrepreneurial attitudes can contribute to the development of women entrepreneurship and will upgrade their status in society.

The paper is based on literature review of research reports as well as multiple educational meetings with the members of Chamber of Commerce & Industry Division Peshawar. This research is significant from many aspects and is based on primary and secondary data. No research on this issue for KP province has been previously conducted. It can lead the policy makers to devise sound policies based on the gaps identified by this study. In addition, it will also encourage the females of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa who run their own businesses to become job providers rather than jobseekers. Furthermore, the paper offers an insight into the issues of women owned enterprises and their growth in an under developed community like the province of KP, Pakistan.

The paper is organized as follows: Section two briefly states the theoretical underpinnings of innovation and creativity. Section three gives a snapshot of the relevant literature. Section four discusses the methodology and model. Section five is composed of the data while sections six & seven conclude this paper with a focus on limitations, policy implications and analysis of the research.

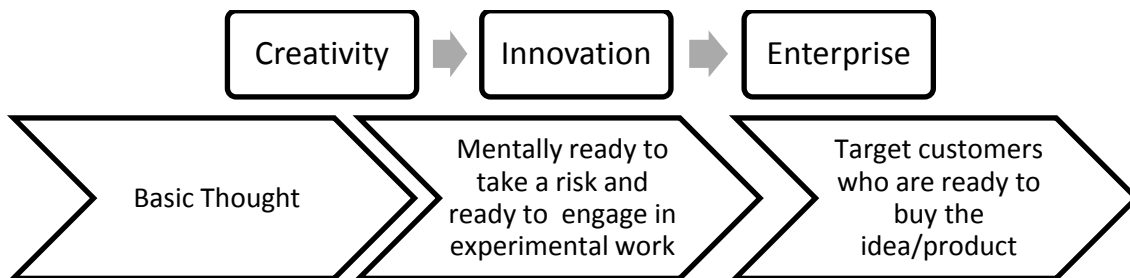
2. Theoretical Underpinnings of Innovation and Creativity

In order to understand the theoretical underpinnings of creativity and innovation, the two terms should be given some shape in the form of appropriate definitions. Creativity is the ability not to start from zero but to generate new ideas by combining, reshaping or reapplying-

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ing existing ideas with the new techniques. Some creative ideas are staggering and impressive; while some ideas are just simple but practical and no one thought that it could be done in another way (Harris, 1998). New ideas come in to formation and development by utilizing the existing ones already in our minds. Creative ideas are the base of innovation. It is marked by the ability to create, bring into existence, to invent into a new form, to produce through imaginative skill. Everyone has considerable creative ability in various fields but that needs to be polished, trained and to be guided in the right direction.

Innovation, in this context, can be explained as “the process through which entrepreneurship transforms the opportunity in to marketable ideas”. It is an important tool for entrepreneurs through which they can bring a change in demand and supply in the market. Innovation is the embodiment & combination or synthesis of knowledge in original, relevant, valued new products, processes or services.



Nowadays, business is entirely driven by innovation. Small incremental changes in product can give a winning edge to the entrepreneur. There are lot of market driven companies or brands and everyone has different package to offer.

All entrepreneurs believe in continuous development. Successful companies start attracting customers even before they are launched in the market. They are just marketing the idea before it is available in the market. Most companies advertise their products well before their launch. The strategies used are market-driven and based on market orientation and an understanding of customers. Through their strategies, these companies change the customers/market behavior, wait for favorable opportunities and finally they market their product and get appropriate responses.

3. Literature Review

Every entrepreneur, on a general level, has to face adverse situations and challenges. However, women in particular have to deal with a lot more than the fluctuations in market values. Women entrepreneurs of Kohat (a city in KP) in particular face significant gender based discrimination. Shortage of resources, lack of product market information, sub-standard education and training and little to no assistance from governmental agencies are pressing problems in many regions. Partial or no encouragement from male family members, and improper networking system are further problems faced by women entrepreneurs. (HafizUllah, Zulqarnain M Ahmad, 2012)

According to Madiha Gohar, Asma Rauf and Ayesha Abrar (2011), women are supposed to play the role of homemakers in many societies, particularly in Pukhtoon society, where they have special status of homemakers. On account of this position they are mainly affected & opposed by institutional forces at a household level.

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According to an essay entitled Empowerment of Pakistani Women Sociology (2013), women of Dir Lower (a village in KP) exercise their rights and duties within the fold of Islam. Non-government organizations are also active in northern areas to help out women entrepreneurs but some of the religious segment and moderators in the society are against the NGO activities aimed at women as they are confused and misinterpreted as western agenda. The same issue was discussed in the research work entitled Empowerment of Rural Women through Micro-Credit: an Example of Rural Support Programs in Pakistan conducted by Inayatullah Jan and Saleh Hayat (2011). According to them, the study is an attempt to explain and exemplify micro-credit Programs of a selected non-governmental organization working in Pakistan that have enabled women to improve their self-respect and social-image.

Furthermore, the political, geographical and social crisis has an adverse effect on Pakistan's economic growth. The jeopardized scenario is a menace to women entrepreneurship. Gender-based discrimination for women entrepreneurs, meager access to information, inadequate education & training facilities are the main hurdles (Afza, Hassan and Rashid, 2010). These arguments are supported by another research study conducted by Palaniappan, Ram opal & Mani (2012) which observes that the lack of leadership; planning and insufficient financial resource allocation are some other difficulties that women usually face while carrying out their business related endeavors. The government of Pakistan is working on many projects to encourage female entrepreneurship especially at the level of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It creates employment opportunities for other women and also provides a variety of product/service provision and reduces the level of poverty (Samli, 2002).

Muhammad Adeel, Anjum, Nausheen and Khan (2012) highlighted the problems of women entrepreneurs of Quetta, (a city in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan). They surveyed a sample of 100 women entrepreneurs by using a structured questionnaire. The result investigated various problems faced by women entrepreneurs. According to their findings, the women, who were an overwhelming population chunk, faced inequalities in terms of education, empowerment, employment and all other significant aspects of life as compare to men in society.

Different authors' defined entrepreneurship in different ways, Hafizullah (2012) described entrepreneurship as an ability to create value for the product, implement novel ideas or modify the old ones to bring innovations into businesses. Non-constructive force is always exerted by culture on creativity. A creative person realizes that there are many possibilities to present the same thing in different manners.

The role of creativity and innovation in an entrepreneurial venture is essential. Creative people persistently work hard to improve the ideas and possible solutions. They improve their work by gradually altering and refining the product. Creativity and innovation are inter-related and cannot be separated from entrepreneurship, which is manifested in documents of enterprise (Barringer and Ireland, 2006). The relation of innovation and creativity is also outlined by Martins & Terblanche (2003) that states that an enterprise is a successful result of a two-stage process that involves creativity and innovation. Creativity is the result of bringing novelty in existing useful applications (Amabile et al., 1996), while innovation is to derive a new product/service or introduce an improvement to existing process by implementing new ideas (Heye 2006).

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Entrepreneurs implement creative ideas to introduce innovative products or services, or to deliver products or services in a new, more efficient, and hence innovative way. Innovation in new product development could include upgrading an existing product or developing a totally new concept to create an original and innovative product (Larsen & Lewis, 2007). This is also true for services and processes, thus innovation is recognized in the literature as ranging from the incremental to the radical.

Innovation should permeate through the various elements of the organization's business model in order to make it harder to be copied by an adversary (Loewe & Dominiquini, 2006). Hence, innovation is not only assessed by the fresh products or services offered by an enterprise but also by new and more efficient ways of developing, producing or delivering products or services. It is argued that creativity is not required solely in the domain of certain sectors or departments, or only in the development of new products or services, but is needed at every level of every type of organization. Creativity is seen as going beyond new products, new services and new and improved process (Cook, 1998; Heye, 2006).

According to the response in discussions, 50 % of women gave up their business after launching a new business because of lack of proper professional guidance. They could not cope up with the market demand due to lack of technical knowledge. They were not able to understand and grasp the concept of survival of the fittest in the competitive market. This study illustrates the role of innovation & creativity in entrepreneurship and its impact in a non-developed area like KP.

Given the fore mentioned literature, it is important to focus on an aspect that has not yet been addressed by existing research. Hence, the analysis and research work done in this paper aims to analyze the hypotheses:

H1: Women entrepreneurs in KP are inclined to those business that are deemed less provocative to social norms and require minimum interaction with men during working hours.

H2: Age and marital status of a women play a significant role in establishing a startup.

H3: The capabilities of women are more undermined in rural of KP as compared to urban area of KP.

3. Research Methodology

This literature work and research paper is based on the contemporary issues faced by women in Pakistan and abroad. The years of study selected are from 2002 onwards. These years were chosen to give a more recent yet comprehensive picture of the scenario at hand in KP.

Individual meetings and groups discussions were conducted with female entrepreneurs, who are also members of Chamber of Commerce. Often, the meetings were followed by a question and answer session. The purpose of this study is to explore the personal views of women entrepreneurs and to understand the factors that affect the growth of women owned enterprises in Pukhtoon society. To achieve this objective, both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used because they are well suited to the problems that need to be explored. The research findings are different from others because the previous work was limited to just one city. Issues such as financial problems, lack of family

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support, norms & values and the role of society were discussed in previous works. The main concern of growth, after launching a business, to make space and demand for the product or service remained untouched and was not discussed. To start a business is just the first step; to learn the tactics which increase the demand of specific products in a market is the essence of the business.

For this study, all the data was collected through a qualitative ethnographic approach (Morgan and Smirch, 1980). Respondents were selected using criterion and snowball sampling (Patton, 1990). Face-to-face interviews with 200 entrepreneurs were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with those respondents who could not complete the questionnaires. A sample of 200 was chosen because it is a fairly accurate representation of the general views and mindset of female entrepreneurs in the province. It should be kept in mind that the province is not culturally inclined towards female entrepreneurship. Hence, this sample size is a fair representation of what is supposed to be highlighted. Furthermore, since the nature of the survey was inclined towards empowerment of the respondents involved, the response rate was an astounding 100% since every candidate was willing to answer readily in the hopes of bringing about improvement.

4. Data Analysis: Profile of Women Entrepreneurs

The following tables and graphical data are compiled on the basis of information collected by interviews. It includes information on the types of business the respondents were involved in, their qualification level, age and marital status.

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Table 1: Business Types

Business Type	Number	Percentage
Edible oil	3	1.5%
Hotel /Restaurant	3	1.5%
Boutique	84	42%
Gems collection/Jewelry	5	2.5%
NGO	9	4.5%
Educational services/school	4	2%
CNG/Petrol	5	2.5%
Handy Craft	21	10.5%
Wedding Hall/Catering	5	2.5%
Pharmaceutical	7	3.5%
Hair oil /Shampoo Manufacturer	2	1%
Textile industry	2	1%
Beauty salon/Parlor	20	10%
Spare Parts	1	0.5%
Flour Mill	2	1%
Food Manufacturer/Frozen food	5	2.5%
Dairy Products	1	0.5%
Mineral Water	2	1%
Hospital/Clinics	6	3%
Furniture	1	0.5%
Auto Mobile	1	0.5%
Services	9	4.5%
Import & Export	2	1%
Total enterprises	200	

The following bar chart describes that major business in the province is of boutique/readymade garments for ladies, gents and kids which is 42%, the second highest profession adapted by these ladies is handicrafts which is 10.5 %, the third category is of beauty salon related work comprising of 10% respectively. Females of KP are also interested in helping other females who are in need so the next one is NGOs which has 4.5%, Other services comprise of 4.5% which include legal services, property and fitness services. Pharmaceuticals and hospital/clinics make up 3.5% and 3% respectively. Furniture designing is a neglected profession as only one participant was engaged in that business. As we all are aware, high quality wood is easily available in KP. This untapped market means that the margin of creativity and innovation present here is more than any other industry.

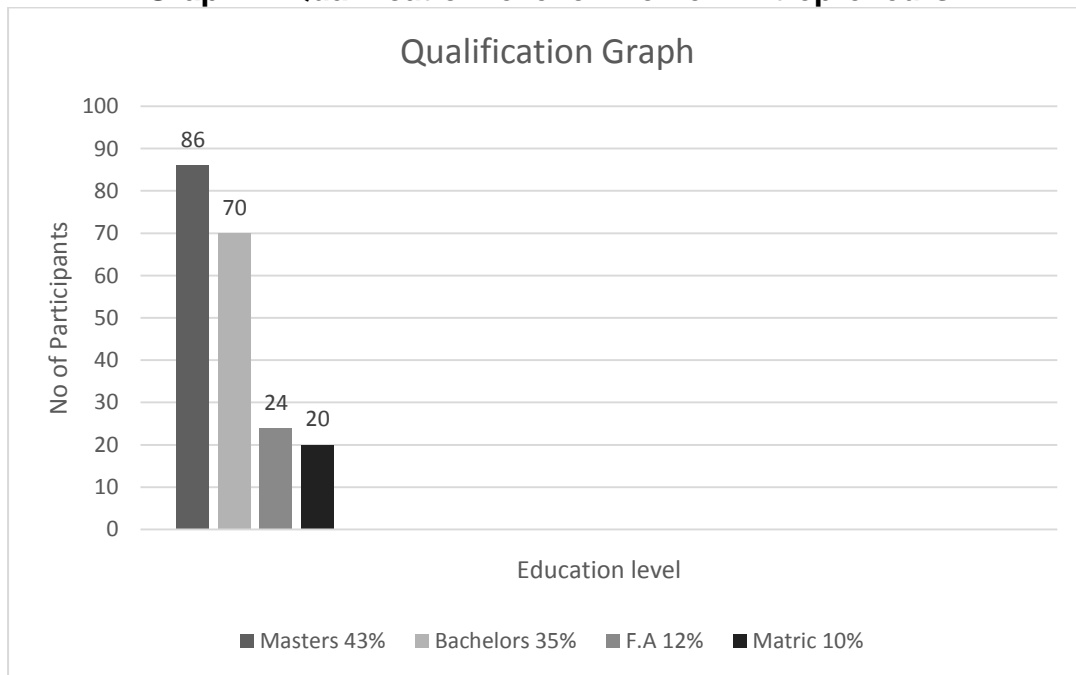
The alarming point is that import and export make up just 1% and same is the case with fabric industry while the number for frozen food industry and gems industry is just 2.5%. This percentage can be increased by providing trainings to the women who want to start their business and this can, in turn, help them export these goods. Textile industry and gems industry of KP also need attention and a lot can be done so that women entrepreneurs can start business in this category.

According to statistics, 30% (60 participants) were those who wanted to increase their income level to support their family and help provide for the necessities of life like education and livelihood. 36% (72 participants) of them were interested to start the particular business in order to hone their potential or utilize their creativity. 22% (44 participants) joined their

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business because they studied the particular subjects and wanted to merge their qualification with the respective business. Lastly, 12% (24 participants) were those who inherited business.

Graph 1: Qualification level of Women Entrepreneurs



The data reveals that most of our women entrepreneurs are educated and well qualified as the line chart shows 86 members out of 200 had completed their masters. However, what should also be noted is that they did not study business subjects and pursued master degrees in subjects such as chemistry, psychology, journalism, Urdu, English. Due to a general dearth of jobs they joined or began businesses to meet their needs. The need of the hour is to get the relevant training regarding the launch of specific product business, marketing and auditing. The second highest category of women entrepreneurs have bachelor degrees, comprising of 35% while 12% of them have cleared. Those who are below these levels of qualifications are 10%. It seems quite interesting that only 12 of them have master degree in business administration while 28 have BBA in finance or fashion designing.

The following are the views of some participants regarding impacts of innovation & creativity on the success of their respective businesses.

“I attended my training courses before starting my business and it was very helpful during my startup and now I have a successful business.” (Respondent No 107)

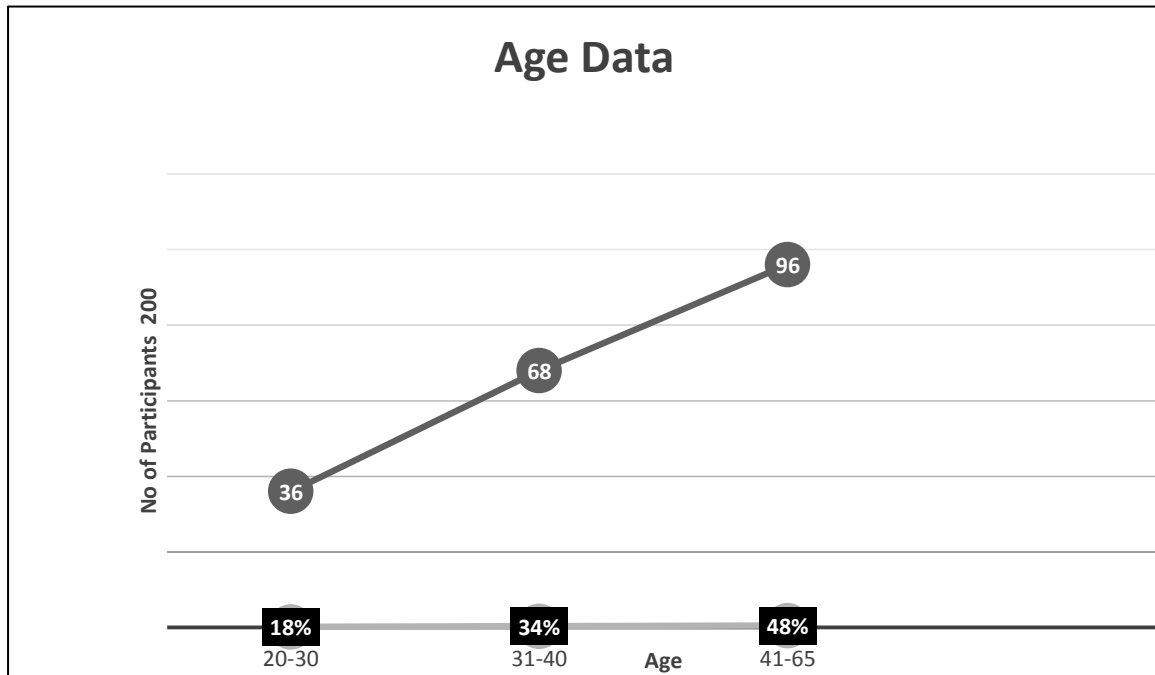
“I started my own business because I am interested in fashion designing. It is a creative field and creativity & innovation is base of this profession.”
(Respondent No 108)

“I had skills and I wanted to utilize it. Plus, I wanted to become independent “
(Respondent No 89)

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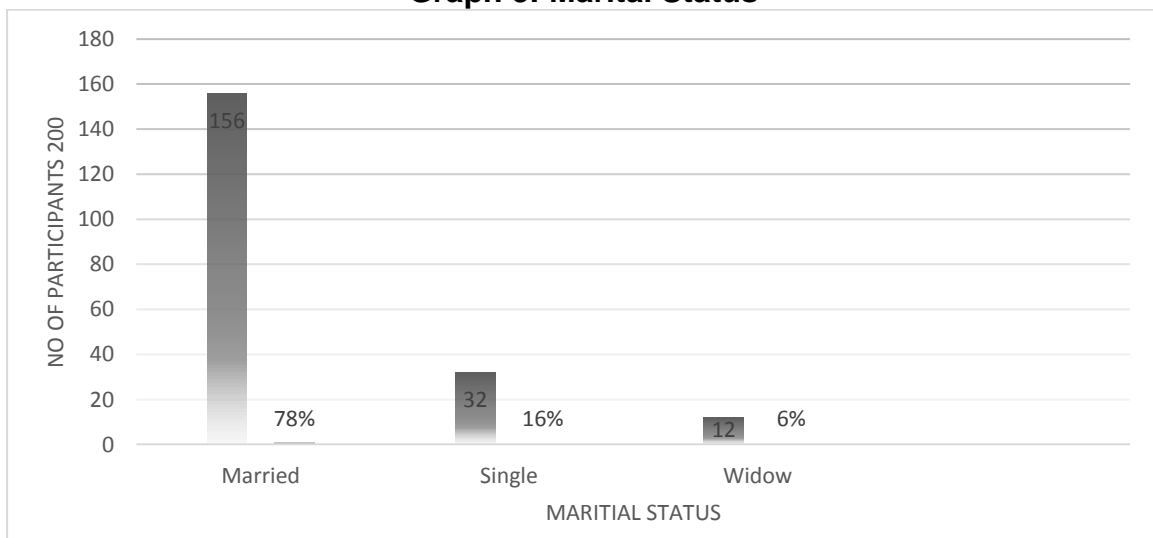
"I had an assignment by the name of Pritenia Benda during my studies. After its completion I made it by my own brand and then I started it as a profession and registered it". (Respondent No 185)

Graph 2: Age Data



According to this graph, the largest category of participants (48%) were aged between "41-65", while 34% were aged between "31-40" and 18% were aged between "20-30." As can be seen, young entrepreneurs are lower in number. Young and energetic females should be encouraged towards the business world to inject some much needed creativity into this sector.

Graph 3: Marital Status



This bar chart shows that 156 out of the 200 (78%) women entrepreneurs were married and single entrepreneurs were just 16% while a very small number (6%) of business women belonged to the widow category.

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This suggests that it is difficult to start a business and run it successfully for those females who are alone and need assistance or guidance from their surroundings. This is particularly problematic in KP, since there is a large number of females who are in severe need to find means to earn and sustain themselves or their families.

5. Findings and Analysis of Hypotheses

This section of the study investigates the relation of data with the issues at hand in order to validate or reject the hypotheses presented and obtain conclusive results. A descriptive analysis is presented as:

H1: Societal constraints are likewise viewed as a test confronted by women entrepreneurs. They are demoralized to take part in business exercises by restricting their associations to male dominant businesses and discouraging their social mobility. It can be understood from table 1 that 40 percent of women are involved in successfully established business of boutiques and 10 percent in Beauty salon/Parlor, which are considered to entail little interaction with men. On the contrary businesses like sale of spare parts and automobile attract the least number (0.5%) of entrepreneurs. This hypothesis is strongly supported by the data provided and hence it is adopted.

H2: The role of age and marital status of a woman for establishing a start-up is clearly indicated by the data provided in graph 2 and 3. From the respondents, 48% were aged between "41-65" while 34% were aged between "31-40", and 78% of women were married. These figures imply that women of KP often get a chance for entrepreneurial activities once they have met their proposed family responsibilities and are liberated of household duties. Furthermore, marital status might often affect access to capital for startup.

H3: This issue arises due to multiple factors such as strict cultural boundaries and low literacy rate. 38 percent of women involved in Handy craft (10.5%) belong to rural areas with education up to matriculation / intermediate or with a vocational training. The figure forms to be 8 out of 200 respondents and is the only fraction to symbolize rural area of KP in the Chamber of Commerce.

As to the issues of women entrepreneurs, the argument findings are as anticipated. All the hypotheses are found relevant and have been accepted. This implies that women entrepreneurs of KP, Pakistan face distinct problems adjoined to the perception and living conditions of Pukhtoon society. In addition, the importance of creativity & innovation for the survival of businesses has been discussed and agreed by all participants. The following points were concluded from this research interview.

- I. 32 % of them were convinced of the importance of innovation & creativity in business.
- II. 18% were already implementing these idea in their businesses.
- III. 38% were willing to apply the theme of innovation & creativity in future endeavors and were committed to expand their business.
- IV. 12% could not accept the idea because of limitations of resources and the nature of their business.

6. Conclusion

The women entrepreneurs of KP can flourish in their business if: the policy makers develop a comprehensive policy for women entrepreneurs of KP by involving real stakeholders and its implementation should be ensured in the province by devising a comprehensive strategic plan of women development and social welfare. Small, medium and large scale projects or economic empowerment of women of KP should be a priority.

All members were convinced that training and technical centers should be established. These centers must provide step-by-step guidelines to women and conduct capacity building programs, impart training and orientations for women who want to start up their own business. Women entrepreneurs should be given more exposure to enlarge the scope of their businesses by providing them the opportunities to learn from the successful entrepreneurs of other developed countries by attending courses and conferences. Women entrepreneurs must also be given need-based subsidies in various taxes, tariffs, fees and all other levies.

The scope of the study is limited to the responses of entrepreneurs. In order to further expand on this study, the proposed extension can include representation of governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to highlight the issues at hand.

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