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Networking and women entrepreneurs: Beyond patriarchal traditions

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Entrepreneurs have changed the corridors of trade, commerce, and markets, through new goods, services and provide ways to modernization and creativeness. It is determined that forces of patriarchy, to a great extent manipulating their professional role and prohibit women to take part in economic activities independently. The study emphasized whether networking enable intended female entrepreneurs to overcome social, cultural, legal, and religious barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. The target population for this study was 950 women entrepreneurs (N = 950) and the sample size consisted of 428 women entrepreneurs engaged in SME all over Pakistan (n = 428). This study used non-probability snowball sampling technique. The study was carried out in two stages with independent sample. The present study proves that networking is supporting women entrepreneurship. The study shows that capability and opportunity recognition is higher among those women who are young, engaged in networking, and have business management background.

Key words: Networking, women entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial capability, opportunity recognition, and patriarchal traditions.

INTRODUCTION

In this dynamic business environment the role of entrepreneurship in the economic turbulence has changed dramatically above the years presuming exceptional importance as a unique force to economic progress, business maturity, national augmentation, and employment creation relying on it. Consequently entrepreneurs are the seeds of industrial development and greater employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship leads to higher income, increases in per capita income, higher standards of living, individual savings, and revenue to the government. Entrepreneurs have changed the corridors of trade, commerce, and markets, through new goods, services and provide ways to modernization and creativeness.

It is believed that encouraging a dynamic pro-entrepreneurial background will capitalize on personal and communal economic and social achievement on a regional, national, and international scale. It is important

to understand that entrepreneurship on economic development diverges through improvement of a country, the part of economic action, and the amount and excellence of entrepreneurial provision. The intention of individuals to set up new businesses has proven to be a fundamental, enduring, frequently used, and continuing construct in entrepreneurship research (Thompson, 2009) and learning about their entrepreneurial talent only by starting a new firm (Stam, et al.,2008).

Women and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play vital role in entrepreneurship development. A large number of women entrepreneurs are engaged in small size businesses and a small number busy running medium scale business. The overall distribution shows that 19% women entrepreneurs deal in retail, 27% in industrialized business, and 54% in services segment (Goheer, 2003). The service sector is most dominant among women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. In the given environment of social and cultural difficulties faced by female entrepreneurs in Pakistan, it may be noticed as a realistic entrepreneurial rejoinder to limited contribution towards economy. The sector wise engagement of women entrepreneurs is as: 47% women are engaging in textile/

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garment business, 34% are involved in education and health care, 33% in beauticians, 12% in manufacturing, 5% in food, and 12% in others (Goheer, 2002).

Pakistan needs entrepreneurship chiefly for two reasons: firstly to capitalize on new opportunities and secondly to generate new jobs. A large number of men and women are unemployed and this number is increasing day by day. Since the government may find it difficult to uphold the required level of employment, entrepreneurship is one of the resorts that can help to create new ventures and jobs also. Those who are familiar to entrepreneurship repeatedly communicate that they are having more openings to apply innovative choices, higher confidence, and on the whole superior intellect of command on their personal lives. The field of entrepreneurship should focus on recognition and utilization of future prospects, the individuals involved, and the modes of actions used to exploit the opportunities Bruyat, and Julien, 2000; Bygrave, 1994; Hitt et al., 2001; Zahra and Dess, 2001; Eckhardt and Shane, 2003; Davidsson and Honig, 2003). Wennekers and Thurik (1999) correctly noticed that 'SMEs are the medium in which entrepreneurship flourish.

The major reasons of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are two folds; one being the social and cultural norm of 'purdah' (veil) and 'Izzat', and the second being the concept of 'Chastity' (honor) which place severe restrictions on their mobility and they are not allowed to go out and work with men, and might cast doubts on their good reputation and reduce marriage chances. It is determined that forces of patriarchy, to a great extent manipulating their professional role and prohibit women to take part in economic activities independently (Shabbir, 1996; Shaheed, 1990; Shah, 1986; Roomi, 2003; Hibri, 1982). Keeping in view the mobility problem, they have to restrict their businesses to areas, such as education, health, beauty, etc where they have women employees to manufacture products for women customers (Roomi, 2003). Although, one can find a few women working in the non-traditional areas but they can be counted on fingers (Roomi, 2003). As their businesses grow, most of the women think that the hardest nut to crack is to deal with the labour force because most of the labour force is uneducated male, who are mostly rude and rough not ready to accept the authority of women.

The social and cultural portrait with minor differences enables a conventional patriarchal arrangement and roles based on sex. This is a critical omission from the understanding of women's entrepreneurship, because the social compositions, work, family, and planned social life differ broadly in rising economies (Allen and Truman, 1993; Aldrich et al., 1989). The labeled roles of imitation and manufacture allocated to male and female resolve on the whole atmosphere of Pakistani culture and institute the standing of man and women (Goheer, 2003; Roomi, 2003). The reproductive character bounds female to remain home, where they give birth to babies and increase the family. The convention of male respect linked with the

virginity of their female dealings curbs women's movements, bounds societal communication and compels a boundary on their economic engagement. The participation of women in economic activities is crucial not only from a human resource perspective but vital even for the objective of raising the status of women in society.

The present research is intending to study and explore how networking plays vital role to motivate and enhance women participation in entrepreneurship to make this large chunk of work force productive and useful. The present study is going to add Pakistani aroma to examine as to what kind of help Pakistani women entrepreneurs can get through networking. The women entrepreneurs in Pakistan are generally engaged in small medium enterprise, therefore, intends to examine how networking can help to motivate, encourage, and enhance women's participation in entrepreneurship. Another aspect of the research is to study how networking will enable intended female entrepreneurs to overcome social, cultural, legal, and religious barriers faced by women in Pakistan. The study examines the role of networking in creating conducive business environment to excel entrepreneurship generally and women entrepreneurship particularly in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Networking has captured the attention in the community of scientists and they are investigating the influence of networking on economics and entrepreneurship. Not only sociologists have a primary interest in networking, but economist, agriculturist, geologist, and management scientists also have analyzed social networking from different perspectives (Sanjeev and Van der Leij, 2006). To survive in this competitive world, it is imperative to develop a strong entrepreneurial and social network of information and referrals. Networking plays an essential part in binding and bringing firms together into a sound and innovative system of relational contracting, collaborative product development, and multiplex inter-organizational alliances (Staber, 2001). The networking is emerging as the signature of organization in this information age (Lipnack and Stamps, 1994). In this regard several related terms were used synonymously that include 'innovation system' (Braczyk et al., 1998), 'milieu' (Maillat, 1995) and 'cluster' (Porter, 1990). Information is a major resource for women entrepreneurs and can connect to marketplaces, suppliers; costs, technology, and networking have appeared as valuable policy for contributing assistance to female entrepreneurs (Frazier and Niehm, 2004). Networking provides entrepreneurs through a broad variety of priceless sources not previously in ownership and assist to accomplish their goals (Hansen, 1995; Jenssen, 2001; Ripolles and Blesa, 2005; Welter and Kautonen, 2005).

The negative aspect of networking is in their sterility, their failure to offer variety of thought, perspective and

opportunity (Dodd and Patra, 2002). It is suggested that evolution of relationally embedded networking ties may pre-sent several potential disadvantages (Coleman, 1988; Dubini and Aldrich, 1991; Granovetter, 1985; Hesterly et al., 1998; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). The networking consisting of family and friends tend to move in the same circles as the entrepreneur, these resources may not offer much beyond the entrepreneur's own scope; they may not be adequately diverse in nature (Anderson et al., 2005).

Evidence suggests that there is also inertia in decision making (Capello, 1999). Networking actors may find it difficult to make effective use of knowledge because they face resistance from others to make changes in procedures in which knowledge is embedded (Lawson and Lorenz, 1999; Hoang and Antoncic, 2003). The networking can contribute in the form of over embeddedness, which occurs as the firm experiences an over abundance of embedded ties (Uzzi, 1997). It is observed that if the firm assumes all network ties need full relational embeddedness, it may allocate too many resources to tie development, experience excess constraints on actions, and be inhibited from successful early growth (Hite and Hesterly, 2001; Uzzi, 1996). Prior research has recognized that networking is a vital source of information for entrepreneurs and small enterprises (BarNir and Smith, 2002; Brush et al., 2001; Greve and Salaff, 2003). Based on the literature, the study asserts:

H₁: Entrepreneurial networking is positively associated with women entrepreneurs' participation in SMEs.

Capability is described as the personal's skill to make active individual sources, the surrounding's and enterprise's resources to deal with definite working conditions effectively like capabilities are firmly related to the way in which persons deduce and append significance to their occupation (Sandberg, 2000). It has been discussed widely that capability has an encouraging indication towards entrepreneurship (Bosma et al., 2002; Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Gimeno et al., 1997). The entrepreneurship research argues that capabilities and human capital have influence on entrepreneurship (Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Cuervo, 2005). The rationale of networking is to increase using sources previously not in custody of entrepreneurs. In this situation capability does not match with attained information, ability of resolving troubles, individual attributes simply; though it is relatively a compound notion together with several critical facets: actions, sources, and purposes, institutional corresponding persons, inside and outside enterprise consumers.

It is observed that individuals who are to start a new business have superior chances of involvement in entrepreneurship as against individuals who believe they lack this entrepreneurial capability simply because they do not have networking linkages. Prior research reveals that the entrepreneurship capability is important for becoming an

entrepreneur (Molinas, 1998; Man et al., 2002; Bosma et al., 2002; Davidsson and Honig, 2003). Entrepreneurs are defined as those individuals who exercise their ability and willingness to perceive new capabilities and to introduce specific ways of seizing opportunities into the market in the face of uncertainty (Wennekers and Thurik, 1999). Based on this literature, the study stressed:

H₂: Higher the entrepreneurial networking the greater will be the entrepreneurial capability among women entrepreneurs.

An entrepreneurial opportunity is defined as a composition of plans, convictions and deeds that make possible the formation of prospect products and services in the non-appearance of existing marketplaces for them (Venkataraman, 1997). According to Homans (1974) entrepreneurial opportunity is defined as an opportunity to engage in entrepreneurial action, in which entrepreneurial opportunity denotes a sub-class of some broader category of human action because all human action is arguably motivated by profit. Previous research described entrepreneurial openings are conditions in which novel goods, services, unprocessed objects, and managing processes can be initiated and sell at better price as compare to costs of manufacturing, (Casson, 1982; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). A past study has revealed opportunity identification is higher among entrepreneurs who have family members in business or personally knowing somebody who has initiated a business (Matthews and Moser, 1995; Sanders and Nee, 1996; Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Morales-Gualdrón and Roig, 2005; Arenius and Kovalainen, 2006; De Clercq and Arenius, 2006; DeTienne and Chandler, 2007).

One of the central questions in the field of entrepreneurship has focused on the identification of opportunities. The identification of opportunities is important because it is always the first step in the entrepreneurial process (Baron and Shane, 2005). Traditionally, this line of inquiry has sought to understand why some people, and not others, identify entrepreneurial opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Recent research suggests opportunity insights are directly related to opportunity recognition experiences (Corbett, 2005) and the match of learning style demanded by a given situation (Dimov, 2007). Entrepreneurship research explained that networking (social networks) influence opportunity recognition, entrepreneurial direction, occupational judgment to turn into an entrepreneur, and grow as successful business (Singh, 2000; Hmieleski and Corbett, 2006; Ripolles and Blesa, 2005; Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Morales-Gualdrón and Roig, 2005; De Clercq and Arenius, 2006; Lee and Tsang, 2001; Ufuk, 2001). Based on this literature, the study emphasized:

H₃: Higher the entrepreneurial networking the greater will be the opportunity recognition among women

entrepreneurs.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The target population for this study consisted of 950 women entrepreneurs (N = 950) and the sample size comprised of 428 women entrepreneurs engaged in SME all over Pakistan (n = 428). The study used non-probability snowball sampling technique also known as network, chain referral, or reputational sampling for identifying and sampling or selecting the respondents. The snowball sampling technique has been used by social researchers in interconnected network of people or organizations for primary data collection in the past (Babbie, 1995; Bailey, 1987; Kidder and Judd, 1986). The important feature of this sampling technique was that each respondent or subject was connected with another through a direct or indirect linkage.

Instrument

In this study both interviews and questionnaire based surveys were used for primary data collection. The interviews were conducted in the pilot study to find out the gaps. The main instrument for collecting primary data was questionnaire based survey. The data was collected from 428 women entrepreneurs in five major cities of Pakistan that is, Karachi Lahore, Islamabad/Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Quetta. Data collection was difficult task in general and more troublesome when it comes to collect data from women respondents generally and in Pakistan particularly. Due to this issue in the present study respondents were personally persuaded to get filled in questionnaires and as a result out of the total 950 respondents, 428 responses were received, therefore, 43 % was the response rate.

Measurement

Entrepreneurial networking was measured by using three items from networking scale developed by Lee et al. (2001). The networking scale was further validated and used by (Taormina and Kin-Mei Lao, 2007).

In this study Likert scale was used rating options categorized as, 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 2= disagree, and 1= strongly disagree.

Entrepreneurial capability was measured by using six items from a scale of competence developed and used by a group of scholars (Hindle and Klyver, 2007).

The scale measured the level of entrepreneurial capability among entrepreneurs. In this study the same Likert scale categories were used.

Opportunity recognition was measured in different studies by using different scales. One of the scales used for measuring entrepreneurial opportunity was developed by (Crossan et al., 1999).

In this study entrepreneurial opportunity was measured by using six items from scale developed by Crossan et al. (1999). In this study the same Likert scale categories were used.

Procedure

This study was carried out in two stages with independent sample; Phase-1 was consisted of try-out or pilot study in which potential respondents were screened. Phase-2 constituted the main study

and consisted of hypotheses testing. The previous studies dealing with male entrepreneurs proved that networking has enormous influence on both entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. The pilot study was conducted in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. As a whole thirty women entrepreneurs were selected for detailed interviews. Based on this pilot study it was examined that local business environment and culture is widely different from that of previous studies. As a result of this pilot study a comprehensive questionnaire was developed to gather data regarding networking and women participation in entrepreneurship.

The study combined the colours of exploration, description, empirical, and hypotheses testing couching the impact of networking on women entrepreneurs' participation in entrepreneurship through SMEs. The data was collected during face to face meeting with women respondents. The face to face meeting with women respondents was considered to be the most appropriate and effective method for a couple of reasons: Firstly, the researcher was able to understand as to how the respondents see and experience the world. Secondly, the face to face meetings enabled the researcher to capture the details needed for penetrating and gathering information without requiring contact over a prolonged period of time with the respondents. Thirdly, face to face meetings were helpful in explaining some of the questions.

The data gathering was started using the listings of various trade associations and agencies such as Chamber of commerce and Industry, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), First Women's Bank, directories/yellow pages and other local directories etc. In this study snow balling technique was used to reach other women entrepreneurs so that data could be gathered from a representative sample and this technique worked well and slowly but steadily managed to have a comprehensive list of women respondents in five geographical locations that is, Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad/Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Quetta. To ensure better representation, accuracy, and precision of the results only those female entrepreneurs included who were operating their businesses not from homes but at a proper site and were operative more than last 3 years were included.

RESULTS

The results of Table 1 reveal the mean, standard deviation, t-value, p-value and reliability of each variable of the questionnaire. The mean results of each variable show that almost respondents are agreed because the mean value is near to level of agreement (agreed=4) and most of the respondents are in favor of "networking and women participation" and have given their response about all variables positively. It is evident from Table 1 that the respondents have the highest level of agreement regarding the Networking. In the context of reliability of data, the networking section (3 items) with reliability of 79% and the Participation variable (4 items) has reliability of 80%, the Cronbach's Alpha of capability using (6 items) is 0.78 and the dimension of Opportunity recognition (6 items) has the maximum reliability that is 0.85. Table 1 further depicts the level significant of each variable, thus all variables are highly significant as shown p-value is less than 0.05.

The results of Table 2 demonstrate that there is significant correlation among all variables by summarizing the values of Pearson's correlation coefficient. It is clear from the result that at 5% level of significance networking is positively correlated with capability as the value of the

Table 1. Group statistics with respect to all variables, that is, networking, participation, competence, and opportunity.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig.2 tailed	Cronbach's alpha
Networking	4.0023	0.84515	97.972	0.000	0.79
Participation	3.9071	0.69877	115.676	0.000	0.80
Capability	3.9217	0.66219	122.522	0.000	0.78
Opportunity Recognition	3.9836	0.66373	124.169	0.000	0.85

Table 2. Correlation matrix of networking, competence, opportunity and participation correlations.

Variable		Networking	Capability	Opportunity recognition	Participation
Networking	Pearson correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	428			
Capability	Pearson correlation	0.198 (**)			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000			
	N	428	428		
Opportunity recognition	Pearson correlation	0.188 (**)	0.450 (**)		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		
	N	428	428	428	
Participation	Pearson correlation	0.091(**)	0.414 (**)	0.445 (**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.061	0.000	0.000	
	N	428	428	428	428

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

correlation coefficient 0.198. Opportunity recognition is also positively linked with networking and has statistically significant correlation coefficient 0.181 at 5% level of significance. The value of Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.09 which shows that participation and networking are positively correlated. Their relationship is significant at 5% level of significance. Finally, we can say that networking is positively and significantly correlated with all the variables. Networking is no more attached only to participation it is also accompanied by capability and opportunities recognition for encouraging women entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that women entrepreneurs'is greater among women who are connected through networking. The present study concludes that networking encourages women entrepreneurs to get access to resources and make easier to equip themselves for the forthcoming entrepreneurial responsibilities. The study shows that networking is helpful for transferring required knowledge and techniques to become entrepreneurs for women to

start new business and sustain the old ones better than competitors. This finding is in line with the framework and it is stated that networking plays a vital role to increase entrepreneurs' participation (Burt, 1992; Fong and Ooka, 2002; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

The study confirms that capability is greater among those women who are linked to each other through networking. The study further confirms that higher the capability the greater the women participation in entrepreneurship. The present finding states that networking plays vital role to enhance entrepreneurial capability among women entrepreneurs and ultimately it leads to increase participation among women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. The present study finding is in harmony with the previous research findings (Hunt, 2000; Lambe et al., 2000; Simonin, 1997; Sivasdas and Dwyer, 2000; Hunt and Morgan, 1995, 1996, 1997; Spekman et al., 1999; Dyer and Singh, 1998; Jap, 1999).

Opportunity recognition motive has been established as a distinguishing factor among women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. It is concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between opportunity recognition, networking and participation among women entrepreneurs. The study further confirms that opportunity

recognition varies among women entrepreneurs and helps women entrepreneurs to increase participation in entrepreneurship (Buchanan and Vanberg, 1991; Baron and Shane, 2005; Corbett, 2005; Mises, 1949; Casson, 1997; Mitchell et al., 2000; Simon et al., 2000; Alvarez and Busenitz, 2001). This study concludes that entrepreneurial participation is greater among those women who are member of a networking group. This finding is in line with the framework and theory in which it is stated that opportunity recognition plays central role to enhance women participation in entrepreneurship (Gaglio and Katz, 2001; Venkataraman, 1997; Singh et al., 2000; Sarasvathy, Simon and Lave, 1998).

Conclusions

The primary intention in this study is to investigate that networking enable women entrepreneurs to access key resources from its environment, such as information, access, capital, goods, services and so on that have the potential to maintain or enhance individuals or firm's competitive advantage. It is agreed that successful entrepreneurs shape a considerable section of those selecting to be entrepreneurs all over the world are connected through networking (Minniti, Arenius and Langowitz, 2005; Mitra, 2002; Snyder, 2003).

In this study the first hypothesis that entrepreneurial networking is positively associated with entrepreneurial participation among women entrepreneurs has been accepted. It is further elaborated that entrepreneurial networking is accepted as a distinguishing factor among women entrepreneurs. The mean values are almost close to 4 which means (agreed=4) all respondents agree that networking plays vital role to promote entrepreneurship. In present study the second hypothesis that the relationship between entrepreneurial networking and entrepreneurial capability among women entrepreneurs has been accepted.

The present study reveals that entrepreneurial capability has been accepted as a distinguishing factor among women entrepreneurs. Table 2 indicates that networking and capability are positively correlated which means higher the networking the greater will be the capability and thus encouraging women to become entrepreneurs. This finding is line with the previous studies all over the world (Bosma et al., 2002; Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Foss, 1994; Gimeno et al., 1997; Hunt, 2000; Lowendahl and Haanes, 1997).

The study proved the third hypothesis that relationship between entrepreneurial networking and opportunity recognition among women entrepreneurs has been accepted. Table 2 discloses that networking and opportunity recognition are positively correlated which denotes that higher the networking the greater will be the opportunity recognition and this will lead to increase participation among women entrepreneurs. The study confirms that by forming or joining networks, startups

entrepreneurs and firms consequently use societal, technological, and profit-making aggressive sources that usually need years of working knowledge to gain success (Ahuja, 2000; Nohria and Garcia-Pont, 1991).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There is an impending requirement to stimulate other women to start entrepreneurial action and recognize their prospective by using existing opportunities whilst at the same time sensitizing executing institutions according to the needs of women entrepreneurs. The present study will help women to think raising their issues and challenges with top policy making people and institutions perhaps leading to establish a forum for women entrepreneurs, women associations and bodies to discuss with government officials to address these issues.

The study will encourage women to mobilize in groupings to shape networking to assist and get contact to finance, markets, training, information, and bargain superior terms of reference. This study is expected to provide guide lines to policymaking bodies and other trade related bodies. This study will contribute to create awareness regarding the importance of women entrepreneurship and support to create a conducive environment to train women entrepreneurs. The study will further contribute towards individual entrepreneurs generally and women entrepreneurs specially, to acquire and develop and information technology skills (information collection).

The networking is an important source that women can tap to increase their motivation and participation in entrepreneurship.

It is found that Pakistani women tended to have homogeneous networking at a limited scale, whereas, heterogeneous networking was found to have greater effect to access information and resources. The study analysis confirms that women connected through networking and information from multiple sources is much likely to participate in entrepreneurship. The study predicts that women entrepreneurs may possibly augment their primary performance by establishing and configuring networking due to lower expenditures of approaching information and techniques for increasing their presence in entrepreneurship.

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