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Constraints Experienced by Women Entrepreneurs in Managing Poultry and Handicraft Enterprises

A. Vennila Mary¹ and G. Tamilselvi²**ABSTRACT**

A study was conducted with 150 women entrepreneurs managing poultry and handicraft enterprises in Tirupattur District of Tamil Nadu, India to identify the constraints they faced. The main production constraints experienced by the women entrepreneurs in poultry were high mortality rates, high costs of good-quality feed, and other inputs. The major marketing constraints they encountered were rumours about hormone injection and other alleged health hazards associated with consuming poultry meat and products. Similarly, the major constraints experienced by them in handicraft production were shortages of raw materials, lack of skill-oriented training, and inadequate finance. The major marketing constraints the women entrepreneurs faced were lack of transportation and price fluctuations. These insights can help address the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in these sectors.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneur; Constraints; Poultry; Handicraft; Tamil Nadu

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the ability to develop new ideas and innovative and achieve success with them (Kharga et al., 2023). Women entrepreneurs make remarkable contributions in terms of creating employment opportunities and generating wealth in all economies (Brush and Cooper, 2012). Women who are economically empowered have greater control over decisions, higher self-esteem, a better position and role in the home, etc. (Shoba et al., 2023). Despite the clear advantages that female entrepreneurs bring to an economy and a nation as a whole, their true potential has yet to be seen. They still face

numerous obstacles and hurdles that lower their productivity and profitability globally. Women play a variety of tasks in society, taking part in productive endeavours like running agricultural businesses and caring for their families by preparing food, taking care of their health, and children's education. Evidence abounds that women-led small and micro enterprises have played a substantial role in driving development and progress (Shakeel et al., 2020) and have improved society by generating money, jobs, and inventions (Mozumdar et al., 2020). Agriculture is the most accessible and viable occupation for rural women, offering a wide range of resources.

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Women entrepreneurs are drawn to agriculture-based ventures because they require minimal startup capital, they can employ elderly family members as laborers and provide a primary source of income, particularly for those with limited professional skills in other sectors. Furthermore, agriculture-based enterprises offer an extremely low risk of failure and generate substantial returns. Additionally, the necessary raw materials and resources are easily accessible. By actively engaging in entrepreneurship, women not only gain recognition and confidence but also contribute to a positive shift (Agarwal, 2018). Women entrepreneurs can succeed in agribusinesses with limited education if they know the right technologies and how to use them (Chiekezie et al., 2021).

India has a long history of poultry production in rural areas. To address protein malnutrition, it is essential to boost the supply of protein-rich foods in these areas. Small-scale chicken farming in rural homes or intensive farming using local resources can help achieve this goal, improving food security and nutrition for rural communities. Poultry serves as a crucial source of income for many impoverished and landless families, especially those headed by women seeking additional revenue streams. Handicraft are those products produced by artisans, completely by hand or with the help of hand tools and sometimes using mechanical means as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product (Laurent and Elizabeth, 2024). Handicrafts, which celebrate our cultural heritage, offer another opportunity for women entrepreneurs to excel. India is rich in bamboo resources, second only to China, making bamboo handicrafts an attractive venture. Women have long been involved in crafting bamboo products, and by doing so, they can generate income while engaging in fulfilling indoor activities that preserve traditional techniques.

It gives women the opportunity to participate directly in the production and decision-making processes. Due to a lack of necessary skills and training, women entrepreneurs face obstacles. Despite the significant contributions of women entrepreneurs in the poultry and handicraft sectors, they face numerous challenges that hinder their success and empowerment. Limited access to resources, finance, and technology, coupled with societal constraints and gender biases, restrict their ability to grow and sustain their businesses. Moreover, lack of training, marketing, and networking opportunities further exacerbate the difficulties faced by these women.

This study aims to explore the specific problems and issues encountered by women entrepreneurs in these sectors, to identify strategies and interventions that can help address these challenges and promote their economic and social well-being. By understanding the obstacles and barriers faced by these women, we can work towards creating a more supportive and inclusive environment that fosters their entrepreneurship and contributes to the overall development of the poultry and handicraft industries. Hence the problems and various issues faced by women entrepreneurs associated with the poultry and handicraft sector are discussed in this paper.

METHODOLOGY

The study was taken up to understand the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in poultry and handicraft enterprises. Women entrepreneurs in three selected blocks of Tirupattur District of Tamil Nadu, India were considered for study. In consultation with the Project Director of the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women (TNCDW) and the Tamil Nadu State Rural Livelihood Mission (*Mahalir Thittam*), a list of female entrepreneurs in each chosen village was obtained. Totally 150 women entrepreneurs managing two different

agriculture-based enterprises namely poultry and handicraft were selected from eleven villages, consisting a fixed sample size of 75 respondents from each of the enterprises by using proportionate random sampling method. An *ex post facto* design was used in the study. Both the qualitative and quantitative data were collected by following mixed method like semi-structured interview schedules, personal interview, focus group and discussion. The respondents were asked to mention the constraints in production and marketing of their concerned products and results were tabulated on frequency and percentage basis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The constraints experienced by the women entrepreneurs in managing the poultry and handicraft enterprises are discussed in this section.

Constraints in Poultry Enterprise

An attempt has been made to identify the production and marketing constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in broiler chicken poultry enterprise. The production problems identified by the women entrepreneurs in poultry enterprise are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Production Constraints Perceived by Women Entrepreneurs in Poultry Enterprise

Sl. No.	Production Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	High mortality rate	72	96.00
2	High cost of good quality feed and other inputs	69	92.00
3	Inadequate infrastructure	66	88.00
4	High cost of electricity	62	82.66
5	Lack of knowledge about causes, symptoms and treatment of diseases	59	78.66
6	Tedious procedure for getting credit & subsidies from organized sector and government agencies	51	68.00
7	Lack of knowledge on advanced cost-effective technologies	47	62.66
8	Lack of training in obtaining technical guidance	31	41.33

High mortality rate was the major constraint experienced by majority of the women entrepreneurs (96 %). Most women entrepreneurs face high mortality rates due to poultry diseases like pasteurellosis, new castle, coccidiosis, pullorum disease, fowl pox, and salmonellosis. Rainy seasons cause higher death rates due to poor feeding practices, infrastructure ignorance, inadequate vaccination distribution,

infection prevalence, and unfavourable weather (Bassim, 2019 and Maina et. al 2021). The exorbitant cost of high-quality feed and other essential inputs was cited as a constraint by 92 % of women entrepreneurs. Although they paid a high price, they still struggled to access quality feed crucial for the birds' well-being. According to Oyeyinka (2011) and Maina et. al (2021), other expenses like feed, vaccination,

veterinarian fees, labor, shed, equipment, and electricity charges added to the financial burden. The frequent occurrence of diseases among poultry birds, resulting in additional costs for vaccines, medicines, and veterinarian fees, probably exacerbated this constraint, leading to its widespread reporting by the women entrepreneurs. The majority (88 %) of women entrepreneurs cited inadequate infrastructure as a major obstacle. High costs prevented them from investing in essential infrastructure like land, sheds, and materials, leading to suboptimal housing conditions (Bassim 2019). Although they had local resources and space to construct suitable poultry houses, they surprisingly neglected to prioritize proper housing, worsening the infrastructure deficit. High cost of electricity was reported as a constraint by 82.66 % of the respondents. The reliance on electricity to maintain ideal temperatures in poultry sheds poses a significant challenge for entrepreneurs, as the government's industry classification leads to high electricity expenses. Seasonal fluctuations in electricity usage result in an average monthly bill of Rs. 5,700 for a standard farm, which escalates with the number of birds. This echoes Swain et al., (2009) earlier finding that commercial tariff electricity rates hinder poultry farmers, underscoring the need for policy reform to alleviate this constraint. Lack of knowledge about causes, symptoms and treatment of diseases was perceived as a constraint by 78.67 % of women entrepreneurs. This might be due to lack of training and regular visits of veterinary professionals to impart knowledge about disease management, vaccination and advanced technologies. They desired to acquire training on disease diagnosis and control measures and management. Tedious procedure for getting credit & subsidies from organized sector and government agencies was observed as a constraint by 68 % of the respondents. Only few women entrepreneurs availed the

institutional credit from banks, while most of them have not borrowed any loan from banks. Some of them bought the feed on credit from the feed dealers and the others paid cash. Majority of the women entrepreneurs are struggling financially. (Biswajeet, 2015). Due to the financial institutions' limited ability to offer credit, they are compelled to rely on non-institutional sources of credit. The lengthy credit application process is the biggest obstacle faced by poultry managing women entrepreneurs, followed by exorbitant interest rates. Lack of knowledge on advanced cost-effective technologies was reported as a constraint by 62.66 % of women entrepreneurs. The staff's insufficient and tardy technical assistance causes chicken production to be hindered from achieving its maximum yield. Poor business owners are discouraged from scientifically adopting expensive technology. Unavailability of cost-effective technology forces the poultry managing entrepreneurs to understand the way and technology of scientifically farming chicken, so that a better yield can be achieved. Unavailability of tools and equipment also creates problem in handling the baby chicks and other equipment required for poultry production are creating problem due to the complexity of new technologies to obtain good response in poultry production (Biswajeet 2015).

Constraints in Poultry Marketing

The women entrepreneurs have many constraints in marketing of poultry products. The marketing constraints faced by them are furnished in Table 2. Rumors about hormone injection and other alleged health hazards of consuming poultry meat and other products was reported as a constraint by 72.00 % of women entrepreneurs. There are myths about consuming broiler chicken which may cause infertility and obesity among the children due to hormonal injection to the broilers. It's essential

to set the record straight and overcome this myth. The women entrepreneurs suggested that factual information must be provided to the consumers regarding the use of hormone injections in chicken production, to dispel myths and confusions in chicken consumption. Praveena and Bojiraj (2017) have also reported that gossips are the primary marketing issue faced by the poultry entrepreneurs. "Problems

in the transportation of poultry products like feed, live birds, chicks, meat, egg, medicine etc." was reported as a constraint by 65.33 % of women entrepreneurs. Distant location of market places and high transportation cost leads to transportation problems of poultry products. Praveena and Bojiraj (2017) and Chiekezie et. al (2021) have also reported the transportation problems as a main constraint.

Table 2. Marketing Constraints Perceived by Women Entrepreneurs in Poultry Enterprise

(n=75)

SI. No.	Marketing Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Rumours about hormone injection and other alleged health hazards of consuming poultry meat and other products	54	72.00
2	Problems in the transportation of poultry products (feed, live bird, chicks, meat, egg, medicine etc)	49	65.33
3	Difficulties in the marketing of various poultry products	45	59.00
4	Poor price of poultry products	34	45.33
5	Wide seasonal fluctuations in the prices of inputs and outputs	30	40.00

Difficulties in the marketing of various poultry products was observed as a constraint by 59.00 % of women entrepreneurs. The links between producers and traders on the market are not organized. The quantity and quality of the poultry products sold, as well as the amount of profit made, serve as indicators of the success of a chicken production firm. Some of the key issues with the production system for rural chickens are a lack of markets and marketing expertise. Because there is no intentional effort made to discover an existing market before manufacturing begins, to keep existing customers, and to draw in new ones. Most of them rely on middlemen who purchase chicken for urban markets. The financial needs as well as the perishable nature of the meat and eggs urged the entrepreneurs to

find the shortest routes of reaching customers to avoid profit losses. Poor price of poultry products was observed as a constraint by 45.33 % of women entrepreneurs. The proximity of the market is an important consideration as higher price is provided for both live birds and eggs. As there are too many intermediaries involved in marketing which in turn lead to lower demand during fasting months also lead to poor prices for the meat and eggs.

Constraints in Handicraft Enterprise

The constraints perceived by the women entrepreneurs in handicraft enterprises were classified into production and marketing constraints. The production problems identified by the women entrepreneurs in handicraft enterprise are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3. Production Constraints Perceived by Women Entrepreneurs in Handicraft Enterprise (n=75)

SI. No.	Production Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Shortage of raw materials	67	89.33
2	Lack of skill-oriented training	63	84.00
3	Lack of finance	57	76.00
4	Lack of knowledge on advanced technologies.	46	61.33
5	Family responsibilities	37	49.33
6	Unawareness regarding credit facilities	32	42.66
7	Lack of time	29	38.66
8	Lack of support	28	37.33

The Table 3 reveals that the first and foremost constraint perceived by the women entrepreneurs in handicraft enterprise was "Shortage of raw materials" (89.33 %). The raw material used for making handicrafts is bamboo. The respondents felt that the cost of the raw material is high. One bundle with a weight of 30 kg costs about Rs.700. Sometimes, the bamboo is hallo, which will affect the quality of finished products. They should get it from forest area or from local suppliers. Sometimes they don't get the quality bamboo which in turn lead to shortage. Ranjana (2017) also reported that shortage of raw material was an important constraint faced by handicraft entrepreneurs. Lack of skill-oriented training was perceived as a constraint by 84.00 % of women entrepreneurs. Most of the women entrepreneurs doing this enterprise as it is a family business. They would like to prepare various products like cell phone holders, furniture, baskets, mats, panels, partitions, floorings, lampshades etc. with bamboo. Apart from this conventional use, bamboo is skilfully carved into a wide range of household utensils, colourful baskets, mats, cane belts, and elegant smoking pipes. (spoons, mugs, plates, trays and jugs) and implements are made out of this

'wonder shoot'. According to Sushmita (2019), the women need adequate skills to make all these products and market the same. As there are only a smaller number of vocational institutes which impart training on handicraft making, the women don't get the opportunity to undergo training and to learn necessary skills.

About three-fourths of the women entrepreneurs (76.00%) perceived lack of finance as a constraint, with difficulties in obtaining credit, collateral, and capital. They struggle to obtain adequate finance from credit institutions, leading to the closure of their enterprises (Reena 2018). Banks are hesitant to grant loans to women entrepreneurs due to concerns about repayment, risk-taking, and enterprise management. Lack of knowledge on advanced technologies was perceived as a constraint by 61.33 % of women entrepreneurs. The majority of women entrepreneurs managing handicraft had low levels of education, which limited their exposure to technical expertise and their ability to produce their products using outmoded equipment. Lack of formal education and experience in the field resulted in a lack of knowledge and inadequate networking among women entrepreneurs,

which in turn led to deprived entrepreneurial performance. "Family responsibilities" was perceived as a constraint by 49.33 % women entrepreneurs. Dual role problem for women entrepreneurs in family, in terms of managing home and taking care of kids, still remains unsolved to some extent (Deekshita and Radha 2022). Due to their obligations to their families, women entrepreneurs are only able to exercise a portion of their entrepreneurial ideas and talents in order to manage both their homes and families. Balancing the responsibilities, which shows that this limitation is a major factor affecting the women entrepreneurs (Rani and Kalaivani, 2023). Unawareness regarding credit facilities

was perceived by 42.66 % women entrepreneurs. Due to their limited property ownership, formal education, lack of negotiation skills, and low social mobility, women entrepreneurs did not have access to credit from formal institutions. Instead, they are reliant on intermediaries for higher-interest lending facilities. According to Ranjana (2017) lack of knowledge on credit facilities was a major constraint among women entrepreneurs.

Constraints in Handicraft Marketing

The women entrepreneurs have many constraints in marketing of handicraft products. The marketing constraints faced by them are furnished in Table 4.

Table 4. Marketing Constraints Perceived by Women Entrepreneurs in Handicraft Enterprise

(n=75)

SI. No.	Marketing Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lack of transportation	61	81.33
2	Price fluctuation	54	72.00
3	Inadequate marketing intelligence	45	60.00
4	Lack of remunerative prices	42	56.00
5	Stiff competition	35	46.66

"Lack of transportation" was reported as a constraint by 81.33 % of women entrepreneurs. Craft producers were located in remote rural areas facing the shortcoming of transport costs. Since the bamboo poles are long, separate vehicles are needed to be arranged to bring bamboo from faraway places. This would lead to high transport cost. This finding is in confirmation with the finding of Christian (2010) and Vishwajit (2016). Price fluctuation was perceived as a constraint by 72.00 % of women entrepreneurs. Regular price fluctuation in bamboo was witnessed by the women entrepreneurs due to lack of regular demand for bamboo and more intermediaries' commission during transporting the bamboo. Inadequate market intelligence" was

observed as a constraint by 60.00 % of women entrepreneurs. The women entrepreneurs do not get adequate market information due to their poor communication network. They market their handicrafts to wholesalers, retailers and sometimes directly to customers at home or in weekly market. Inadequate market intelligence is the major hindrance to the growth of handicraft enterprise (Phukan, 2018). Lack of remunerative price was reported as a constraint by 56.00 % of women entrepreneurs. Though the handicraft artisans produce quality products, the lack of assured market for their finished products remains as the biggest hinderance for their growth. Artisans consider that the prices which they receive from the sale of handicraft do no

satisfy or meet up the hard work they have invested in making the product and prices of the products should not be based upon the shape or size of the product rather the hard work done on the products. This finding is in line with the finding of Sushmita (2019). Nearly half (46.66%) of women entrepreneurs cited 'stiff competition' as a significant hurdle, amidst a landscape of intense rivalry and market liberalization. According to Nayyar (2007), the influx of low-cost producers has raised the bar, demanding quick adaptability to evolving market needs. Consequently, these enterprises face escalating costs and dwindling demand, as mechanical goods and plastics replace handmade products, further complicating the business environment for women entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

The study found that women entrepreneurs in poultry and handicraft enterprises face significant production and marketing challenges. In poultry, high mortality rates, high costs of quality feed and inputs, inadequate infrastructure, high electricity costs, and lack of knowledge about disease management are major constraints. Severe marketing constraints include rumors about hormone injection and health hazards, and transportation problems. In handicrafts, shortage of raw materials, lack of skill-oriented training, and lack of finance are main constraints, while marketing constraints include lack of transportation and price fluctuation. Addressing these constraints through policies and programmes by government agencies and NGOs is essential to support women entrepreneurs and develop agro-based enterprises like poultry and handicrafts.

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