

Barriers to Women’s Entrepreneurship: SME Sector in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to address the issues of barriers to success of female entrepreneurship within Sri Lanka. The research methodology/design is based on a qualitative study of fourteen Sri Lankan women entrepreneurs in large and growth (SME) categories. In-depth and focus group interviews were carried out using a semi-structured questionnaire. Maximum variety and intensity sampling was used in selecting the respondents. The research findings point to particular barriers to women’s career advancement in entrepreneurship such as lack of government incentives, labour scarcity, difficulty in providing collateral, access to low interest credit facilities, low access to advanced technology, sexual harassment, and involvement in traditional female type businesses, and the adoption of an “androgynous” leadership style. The paper imparts light on the limited knowledge that exists with regard to the life and behavior of women entrepreneurial orientation in Sri Lanka and highlights the marginalized attention received on extended research about women entrepreneurship as a whole. The practical implications of the study are that policy planners and legislators can make improvements to existing social and labour policies and tax structures that act against emerging women excelling in entrepreneurship. Suggestions for empirical research on a broader basis encompassing the entire island are also stated.

Key words: Women entrepreneurship, Barriers to success, Strategic, Individual characteristics, SMEs

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