



Impact of Women entrepreneurship towards the growth of SMEs: Strategies undertaken by Welimada Small Enterprise Division towards the economic crises

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Abstract

SMEs play a key role in the growth of the economy by enhancing employment, improving income distribution, poverty reduction, developing the rural economy, etc (Ranasinghe, 2012, p. xx). Under the small enterprise division, the development of women entrepreneurs has been rising throughout the years specially to improve the current economic crises. This research is undertaken in Welimada, a city in the Badulla district that comprises many entrepreneurs. The objective of the research is to examine the impact of women entrepreneurs on the growth of SMEs and the strategies undertaken by SED Welimada toward economic crises. This research aims to identify the impact of economic crises on SMEs in Welimada and the implementation of strategies for the survival of businesses of women entrepreneurs. This research will be inductive research and an interpretivism approach. The researcher will use a qualitative research method which will enable to use of interview methods with women entrepreneurs under the SED division Welimada. Findings will be drawn from interviews with six successful women entrepreneurs from six different businesses ranging from batik, agriculture, floriculture, natural handwork, spices, and pottery. The findings will be captured through the qualitative research method according to the conceptual framework developed. The key findings will support the factors that will be identified in the framework: early childhood experiences, education, business knowledge and practices. When there is an increment in income in higher consumer spending it encourages production which leads to economic growth (Rathirane, 2019, p. xx) Hence entrepreneurship can be considered one of the decisive factors for economic development in Sri Lanka. Women's entrepreneurship is important for economic growth as women constitute more than half of the population of this country. SED as well as government institutions can encourage women to choose entrepreneurship as an occupation to enhance the economy, income distribution, earning capacity, etc. In SL SMEs contribute 45% of the GDP and only 25% of women are entrepreneurs (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, *Women Entrepreneurs Development Program*, nd, p. xx). The low representation of women entrepreneurship is due to low confidence, limited access to credit, and lack of financial literacy. The unemployment rate of women is higher as there is a large gender gap of women who are unpaid family members, who account for 20.4% of women compared to 3% of men (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, *Women Entrepreneurs Development Program*, nd, p. xx). Women entrepreneurs innovate, initiate, and engage business enterprises to contribute to domestic development, and enable opportunities to create economic engines for local and global economies. Hence entrepreneurship can be considered one of the decisive factors for economic development in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Small medium Enterprise, Women entrepreneurs, Business, Economic crises, Growth

