

SKILLED WOMEN'S SELF-EMPLOYABILITY AND TVET PROGRAMS IN BALOCHISTAN: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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(This document is unedited author's version submitted to RASTA)

INTRODUCTION

This brief aims to make theoretical contributions to the current body of literature on the relationship between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) investment and economic development. Specifically, we seek to address the gaps and controversies surrounding the empirical evidence regarding the conventional understanding of the role of competent women in driving economic development. By providing more robust and well-supported findings, our study aims to contribute to the ongoing debates in this field. The significant contributions of women to the growth of nations and societies are widely recognized. Working women, particularly female entrepreneurs, play a vital role in driving economic growth, generating employment opportunities, and fostering innovation within their respective countries. Worldwide, the number of working women, particularly female entrepreneurs, has increased.

Despite the long-standing existence of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Balochistan, there remains a need for further research to gain a comprehensive understanding of its implementation and perception by all stakeholders. A nation aspiring to transform its vocational system must critically assess its components and reconstruct them in alignment with national objectives. The objective of this study is to investigate the perspectives and aspirations of female TVET students in Balochistan concerning their current educational experiences and future career prospects. By delving into these aspects, this research aims to contribute valuable insights into the TVET landscape in Balochistan and inform efforts to enhance the educational and career pathways for female students.

TVET institutions face challenges in terms of adequate human resources and physical infrastructure to support their learning and training programs, despite undergoing structural changes and rapid expansion. While more students are receiving an education, the demand for skilled workers continues to rise due to unforeseen economic disruptions. Thus, it can be speculated that enhancing self-employability among skilled women through TVET might lead to job creation. However, empirical evidence supporting this notion is scarce. Therefore, this study aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the following four guiding research questions.

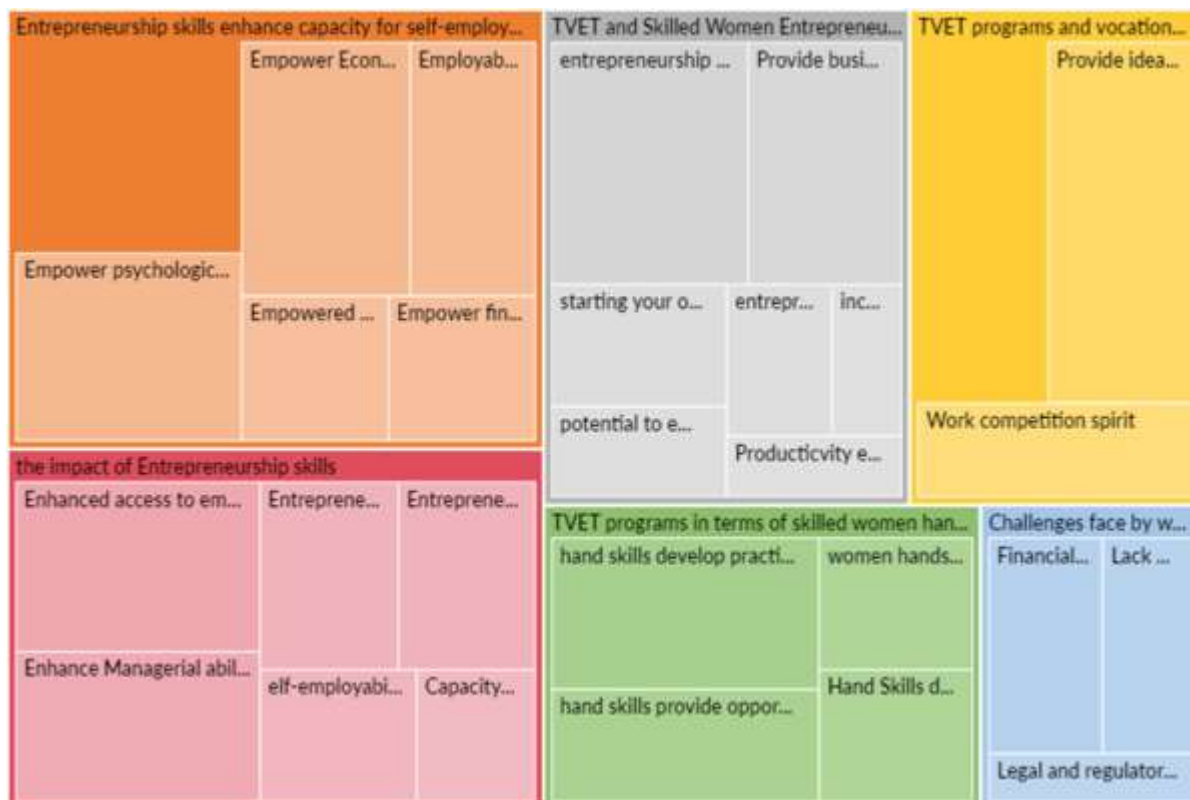
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected from five Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions situated in Quetta, Balochistan. A mixed methods research approach was adopted to examine the skilled women self-employability and the impact of TVET programs in Balochistan. The data collection process was conducted concurrently. Initially, five public and private TVET institutions were purposefully selected from the "BTEVTA" institutional ranking, which categorized them into diploma and certification courses. The selected institutions for this

study encompassed the Government Girls Polytechnic Institute, Saryab Road (GGPI) in Quetta, the Women Technical Training Center in Quetta, the Government Vocational Institute Quetta, the Social Welfare Institute Nawa Killi, and the Women Technical Center Jinnah Town, Quetta. To ensure a representative sample, a systematic random sampling method was employed. This method aimed to provide an equal chance of selection for both currently enrolled and graduated TVET students, irrespective of whether they pursued a diploma or certification. The study encompassed various skill programs, including the TVET Regular Course, CBT course, NAVTTC Session, UNHCR session, and diplomas, ranging from a minimum six-month certification course to three diplomas. Individual visits were made to the respective institutions, and students were invited to participate, resulting in a total of 368 diploma and certificate holders being involved in this study.

Quantitative data for the RASTA project were collected through a self-administered questionnaire using a systematic random sampling method. A total of 420 questionnaires were returned among which 368 well-filled and completed (TVET enrolled and pass out students) for analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were computed using SPSS version 26.0 to summarize the quantitative variables. Both qualitative and quantitative data sources were utilized in this research to provide comprehensive insights. A total of 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted across three layers, involving TVET female graduates, TVET skilled women entrepreneurs, and experts. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using NVivo 11. An inductive approach was employed, applying a thematic analytical framework to examine the data in alignment with the research objectives.

Figure 1. Hierarchy Chart for Findings of the Study



The hierarchical chart effectively fulfills all the objectives of the study, elucidating the determinants of skilled women's self-employability and the impact of TVET programs in Balochistan

KEY FINDINGS

The investigation into the nexus of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), skilled women, and entrepreneurship has yielded a multifaceted set of findings. The empirical analysis illuminated the salient dimensions encompassing skilled women's hands-on capabilities and entrepreneurship proficiencies, underscored the empowerment of women in tandem with the promotion of gender equality, and delineated the challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs.

Theme1: TVET Skilled Women Hands-on Skills

Data from the interviews and field notes indicated that TVET helps women maintain their families, enhance their quality of life, and participate actively in decision-making. The study finding revealed the pivotal role of TVET in cultivating women's hands-on skills, rendering them adept in technical domains. This proficiency not only augments their employability but also underpins their entrepreneurial pursuits, enabling them to engage in ventures aligned with their acquired expertise. Concurrently, TVET emerges as an instrumental conduit for the development of entrepreneurial skills among skilled women. The assimilation of entrepreneurial acumen enables women to effectively navigate the complex landscape of business initiation and sustenance.

Theme2: TVET Skilled Women Entrepreneurship Skills

Our findings suggest that The TVET programme also provided with invaluable advice on how to launch a business. They gave advice on how to work on my business idea and make the best use of the resources I have. Entrepreneurial skills needed to succeed in self-employment can undoubtedly be aided by entrepreneurship knowledge. Effective communication, decision-making, money management, marketing, and networking are a few examples of these abilities. The effectiveness of these skills in boosting self-employment capacity ultimately depends on the individual and the particular challenges they encounter during their entrepreneurial journey.

Theme 3: TVET: Entrepreneurship Skills and Skilled Women Empowerment

Our study finding indicated that entrepreneurship skills can be especially beneficial for housewives looking to contribute to the economy and increase their earning potential. The economic, psychological, and social empowerment of skilled women emerges as a pivotal outcome. This empowerment emanates from their augmented participation in entrepreneurial activities, resonating across familial and societal spheres. It is notably discerned that skilled women are instrumental in poverty alleviation, engendering economic upliftment in their communities. Additionally, their influence extends to positively shaping the health and educational trajectories of their children, thereby fostering holistic social advancement. Moreover, the research accentuates the intrinsic link between TVET and the empowerment of women, which reverberates throughout economic, psychological, and social dimensions. It serves as a catalyst for the dismantling of traditional gender roles, affording women enhanced agency in economic activities and augmenting their contributions to the wider societal fabric. This empowerment, in turn, fuels the propagation of gender equality principles by challenging normative paradigms.

Theme 4: Challenges in the Pursuit of Success: Barriers Faced by Skilled Women in Balochistan

Despite the transformative potential of TVET, a spectrum of challenges impedes the trajectory of women entrepreneurs. The dearth of formal education and managerial proficiency curtails their capacity to navigate the intricate facets of business operations. Moreover, constrained financial support further exacerbates their predicament, restraining their ability to actualize entrepreneurial ventures. These challenges are compounded by a lack of family support, suboptimal self-confidence, and diminished communicative competencies, which collectively engender a milieu of barriers.

Furthermore, a pronounced scarcity of women-owned Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is noted, indicative of prevailing disparities. The integration of entrepreneurship education within formal education systems is found to be inadequate, inhibiting the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset from an early educational juncture. An underlying theme underscored is the imperative of achieving work-family balance. The study illuminates the role of empowered women entrepreneurs as catalysts for transformative societal change. The attainment of equilibrium resonates beyond personal spheres, contributing to the amelioration of gender disparities and the cultivation of progressive social paradigms.

CONCLUSION

The present study has been dedicated to constructing a comprehensive framework aimed at providing support to women entrepreneurs within the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, enabling them to sustain their enterprises in the face of prevailing economic inflation. This section encapsulates the primary outcomes derived from the research, where the study effectively addresses its objectives, shedding light on pivotal facets of TVET institutes' contributions to augmenting women's practical skills in Quetta, Balochistan. In synthesis, the empirical findings of this investigation yield a profound comprehension of the intricate interplay between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), skilled women, entrepreneurship, empowerment, and the corresponding challenges. Through the exploration of diverse themes, encompassing the influence of TVET on women's hands-on aptitude and entrepreneurship proficiencies, the pivotal role of empowerment and the propagation of gender parity, alongside the impediments faced by women entrepreneurs, the research underscores the multidimensional dynamics of this evolving landscape.

The study accentuates the transformative potential embedded in TVET, as it equips skilled women with both technical proficiency and entrepreneurial prowess. This dual skill set not only amplifies their economic horizons but also contributes to their psychological and social empowerment. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the pivotal role that skilled women undertake in mitigating poverty, coupled with their capacity to positively impact the health and educational trajectories of their progeny, thereby radiating a ripple effect of societal enhancement.

RECOMMENDATIONS/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

These concise recommendations leverage research insights to tackle specific challenges faced by skilled women in Balochistan's TVET sector, fostering their empowerment and equitable participation in entrepreneurship. Based on the research findings within the context of Balochistan's TVET programs and skilled women, the following evidence-based policy recommendations are proposed:

Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Education Integration:

Develop a comprehensive framework to integrate entrepreneurship education within TVET programs. This framework should include modules covering business planning, financial management, marketing strategies, and innovation. Collaborate with industry experts to ensure the curriculum aligns with current market demands and equips women with relevant entrepreneurial skills.

Targeted Financial Support Programs:

Establish financial support programs specifically tailored to women entrepreneurs in the TVET sector. Create accessible and low-barrier microloan initiatives to provide women with startup capital for their businesses. Collateral-Free Loan Programs: Collaborate with financial institutions to design and implement specialized loan programs that do not require traditional collateral but instead consider business viability and potential.

Gender-Responsive Mentorship Initiatives:

Implement structured mentorship programs that pair skilled women with experienced entrepreneurs or professionals. Promote successful entrepreneur role models from similar backgrounds who can guide women through the challenges of entrepreneurship.

Empowerment through Capacity Building:

Develop and implement regular capacity-building workshops and training sessions to enhance women's managerial and communication skills. Focus on fostering self-confidence and effective communication strategies to help women overcome barriers. Collaborate with private sector entities, governmental agencies, and civil society organizations to create a supportive ecosystem for skilled women entrepreneurs.

Gender-Equality Promotion in TVET:

Develop policies and guidelines to ensure equal access to TVET programs for both genders. Implement awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes and biases within TVET institutions.

Family Support Initiatives:

Collaborate with community leaders and stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance of family support for women entrepreneurs. Establish support networks that provide assistance in managing work-family balance.

Government Initiatives for Empowerment:

Collaborate with government agencies to establish policies and initiatives that directly empower women economically, psychologically, and socially. Create programs that recognize and celebrate the contributions of skilled women in poverty alleviation and societal betterment.

These policy recommendations are grounded in the research findings and are designed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by skilled women entrepreneurs in Balochistan's TVET sector, fostering an environment of empowerment, equality, and sustainable economic growth.