

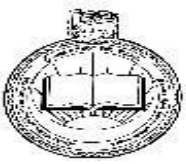
FACTOR AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN NORTHERN PROVINCE

V. Sathana

Senior lecturer, Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Studies and
Commerce, University of Jaffna

ABSTRACT

Even though Sri Lanka has achieved gender parity in educational access, women's economic engagement is still far behind in women-run small and medium-sized businesses. Most women find it difficult to move away from informal SMEs. The purpose of the study is to explore the factors that affect the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in Northern Province. The researcher adopted quantitative research methodology; convenient sampling method was applied to select respondents; and structured questionnaire was utilized to collect data in this study. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to determine the factors affecting women entrepreneurs' success. The result of the study revealed the five factors that hinder the progress of women entrepreneurs in the crisis environment in the Northern Province. Research findings revealed that *culture and gender role* is the major challenge of women entrepreneurs in the crisis environment; the second important factor is *business sustainability*, the third factor is *lack of priorities and welfare programs*, then the raw material is ranked and finally, marketing is ranked as fifth factor. The study offers valuable information to understand the phenomenon of women entrepreneurs in crisis environments. This research revealed considerable implications for decision-makers to understand the problems of women-led enterprises in the crisis context in Northern Province. Women entrepreneurs require training to develop and enhance their business skills and knowledge which will help build resilience building. Second,

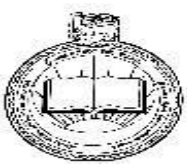


All governance and nongovernment agencies should address the specific challenges of women entrepreneurs and special privileges to access the resources and services considering their both family and business lives. This kind of support will empower and motivate women entrepreneurs.

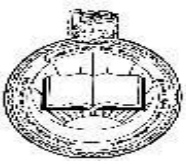
Keywords: *Business sustainability, Culture, and gender role, Economic crisis, Marketing, and Women entrepreneurs*

1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of women's entrepreneurs for economic growth is broadly recognized. Several studies demonstrate the significant contribution of entrepreneurs to economic growth and development (Adikaram and Razik, 2023; Valliere, & Peterson, 2009; Yogendrarajah, 2019). In Sri Lanka, SMEs comprise more than 75% of enterprises and account for more than 20% of exports, 45% of employment, and 52% of GDP (Kulasinghe et al., 2018). Although Sri Lanka has reached gender parity in terms of education, women's economic participation is well below potential; female participation in the labor force was at 40% in 2018, significantly lower than that for men (73%) (SLEDB). Women-headed SMEs are not encouraged in Sri Lanka, and they are struggling to develop from the level of informal livelihood and micro-scale businesses (Nimeshi, & Rodrigo, 2024). The economic crisis and COVID-19 were important issues for entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs were severely affected. The impact of the economic crisis has been abundant in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's efforts to achieve gender parity in economic and political contributions have challenged severe setbacks over the last few years due to consecutive crises (Kelegama, 2016). While the burden of the economic crisis impacted all people in Sri Lanka, women are amongst the most vulnerable groups because of their



destitute position in accessing resources, representation, and decision-making, and their lack of opportunities for economic empowerment (Hemachandra, 2022). Even though Sri Lanka has achieved gender parity in educational access, women's economic engagement is still far behind in women-run small and medium-sized businesses. Most women face difficulties in moving away from informal SMEs. The socio-cultural problems faced by women play a crucial role in shaping women's enterprises. Economic and social issues significantly influence the way women entrepreneurs are perceived. Women face many obstacles in conducting business in developing countries, especially in Sri Lanka. The entrepreneurs have been facing difficulties in Sri Lanka; they must overcome them. Women-headed enterprises are emerging for many reasons, such as seeking recognition, and better employment experiences; women have been satisfied, frustrated, and demanded with business, facing inflexible work environments, attaining a higher-paid managerial position, and finally balancing their work and family life (Chakaborty et al., 2021). Previous study typically demonstrates that women entrepreneurs encounter a larger lack of support such as attempting to access business resources etc; even though, these findings are not always consistent (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Nevertheless, the findings of a study by Centindamar et al. (2012) on the relative significance of the three categories of capital for business, human, family, and financial underlined that these three types of capital affect entrepreneurs of all sexes. In addition, contrary to assumptions, women have a higher impact on their likelihood of becoming entrepreneurs than males do. The statistics show that family capital helps for entering women into entrepreneurship in large families (Ahmed, Chandran, & Klobas, 2017). Still, women entrepreneurs are few in businesses and they have to face many obstacles in their journey. Thus, reducing the barriers through policies and creating awareness to support equal access will help women entrepreneurs overcome cultural barriers. Hence, this study tries to examine the effect of the factors on the journey of women entrepreneurs. Though there are numerous types of

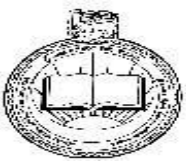


research conducted to validate the challenges of women entrepreneurs, very limited research is conducted to examine the factors for the success of women entrepreneurs in the crisis environment particularly in the Northern context. Research focusing on female entrepreneurs in other socio-cultural contexts is relatively new and limited in number (Surangi, 2022). In addition, the Northern Province has been recovering from the conflict. The context of Northern Province is culturally different, and women's enterprise is also closely tied up with the culture. Hence, this study focuses on identifying the factors affecting women entrepreneurs' success in crisis environments in the Northern Province.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

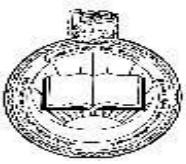
2.1. Women entrepreneur

A woman entrepreneur is a creative, innovative forward-thinking, and risk-taking people and willing to face challenges. A creative and innovative woman can handle and manage risk and uncertainty well, individually and simultaneously creating employment opportunities, and is keen on economic growth and development (Muller-Wieland et al., 2019). Nevertheless, women entrepreneurs remain a minority and encounter numerous challenges along their journey. The challenges evolving from the formal institutions do not seem to be persistent and gender-specific (Shastri et al., 2019). Additionally, due to inequalities in access to various forms of capital, men, and women cannot engage in the same entrepreneurial activity. Johansen (2013), identified that women entrepreneurs are inability to receive institutional, familial, and financial support. According to Noguera et al. (2015), self-efficacy and fear of failure are significant obstacles that prevent women from pursuing a business career.

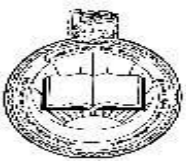


2.2. Institutional Theory

Institutional theory deals with the rules to obtain legitimacy in an institutionalized context. According to North (1991), the game rules can be formal, informal, or assumptions about how the corporate environment operates. Institutions establish standards to which participants in the economy are expected to aspire to be treated as legitimate participants in the economy. According to the institutional theory, three factors contribute to women's entrepreneurship development *Regulative, Normative, and cognitive*. Regulatory factor refers to the different rules and regulations of the government to facilitate women's entrepreneurship development, and normative and cognitive factors include non-regulations, regulations as well as the value of the society. Based on the analysis of these factors, the paper provides many significant challenges that prohibit the development of women entrepreneurs. Moreover, Alaydi (2021) stated that institutions are rules, habits, and norms that govern political, economic, and social interactions, and provide meaning and stability to social life. Formal bodies deal with property rights, regulations, securities, and laws established by governments to regulate the behavior of individuals. Institutions could be formal or informal and include family institutions, religious institutions, legal systems, and economic systems. Formal institutions consist of legal, political, and economic-related terms, rules, and regulations. Formal institutions deal with property, institutions, securities, and laws that are established by governments to regulate individual behavior (North, 1991). They are primarily built by governments to regulate organizations and create or inhibit entrepreneurial opportunities. On the other hand, informal institutions refer to immaterial, implicit, slowly changing, culturally traditional, and socially constructed institutions, because attitudes, values, norms, and codes of conduct are deeply embedded in culture. Moreover, informal institutions also influence how potential entrepreneurs identify opportunities.



Most studies found that true institutions can create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, while informal institutions can have a powerful impact on how individuals seize entrepreneurship opportunities (Welter, & Smallbone, 2011). They suggest that a formal system should be used by women entrepreneurs to develop female entrepreneurship. Women can play an active role in the company ; on the other hand, informal institutions can encourage or discourage women's participation (Gimenez-Jimenezetal., 2020). The interaction between formal and informal institutions is essential to understanding and succeeding in women's entrepreneurship .Women's involvement in entrepreneurship is changing among people. Gender-specific formal institutions in clude the overall constitution defining opportunities for women and men relevant for promoting or hindering female entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, it shapes the status of women in society which affects economic function. Informal institutions are expressed by cultural norms, tradition, and religion which can lead to assumptions about roles given to men and women (Kim, 2022). In the context of entrepreneurship, most often culture defines entrepreneurship as 'male' (Ahl, 2002; Verheuletal., 2006). Fagenson and Marcus (1991) found that women are less likely to be perceived as entrepreneurs than men (Verheuletal., 2006), probably women don't think of themselves as entrepreneurs in the masculine sense (Stevenson,1990). Therefore, if an institution treats men and women unequally, affected groups will confront the challenges. Men and women have different opportunities and expectations. Women entrepreneurs face unique challenges; informal institutions impose additional domestic responsibilities and workloads on women entrepreneurs than male (Welter &Smallbone, 2008). The absence of institutional support may discourage women entrepreneurs from continuous efforts toward social acceptance (Munoz and Kibler, 2016). This phenomenon has a significant negative impact on the careers of women entrepreneurs.



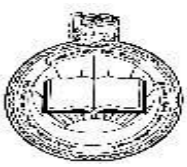
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research study is to identify and gain an understanding of the environmental factors that may become the potential success of female entrepreneurs. The quantitative research method was adopted by the researcher to address the research question. The unit of analysis in the study is women entrepreneurs in the Northern Province who have been running their businesses. A survey questionnaire was developed and circulated among 300 entrepreneurs; it consisted of two sections ; the first one contained the profile information of women and the second one consisted of 36 questions. These questionnaires were developed as Google forms, which were shared with women entrepreneurs directly to the responsible person of the women-led enterprise. This study used a convenient sampling method of non-probability sampling technique. A total of 300 entrepreneurs were selected from different industries in five districts of Northern Province. Out of 300 questionnaires distributed, 244 questionnaires were returned, thereby, giving a response rate of 81 percent. In this study, exploratory factor analysis was used to analyze the collected data.

4. RESULT OF THE STUDY

4.1. Demographic profile

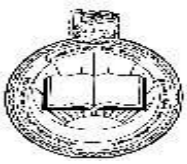
The survey was conducted among women entrepreneurs operating their businesses in the Northern Province. The demographic profile of respondents is explained in Table 1. Based on the respondent summary, a higher number of enterprises were not registered which were 61%, remaining 39 % were registered businesses. Considering the business locations, the researcher collected data from all five districts in Northern Province. There were 31% respondents from the Vavuniya district, 24% respondents from the Mullaitivu district, 21 % respondents from



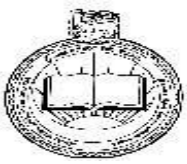
the Kilinochchi district, 15% respondents from the Jaffna district, and 9 % from the Mannar district. The survey in terms of “business building” shows that the majority of businesses are located in the respondent’s residence which 69%, hired buildings and organization’s buildings are relatively low which are 18% and 6% respectively and just 7% of businesses are located in other places. The vast business ideas are owners’ ideas representing 62% while 37% of ideas arose from their family and only 2% of ideas fall under other categories. The selected businesses scoped different levels of “marketing areas” in this survey. However, the majority of the businesses marketing their products at the regional level which is 81 % of total respondents, national and international levels are 15 % and 4 % respectively. The managers of the business organizations have with wide range of “educational backgrounds”; 68% of managers with ordinary level and 25 % of managers with advanced level qualifications, remaining 7% was distributed among diploma, graduate, postgraduate, and professional qualifications; falling 2%,1%,1% and 3% respectively. 87 % of business investment is below 0.5 million, remain 13 % is distributed as follows, 7% between Rs,500,000-999,999, 3% between 1 to 5 million, 1 % between 6 to 10 million, 1% between 11-50 million and 1% above 51 million. 80 % of businesses revenue is below 0.5 million, 15 % is between Rs,500,000-999,999, 2 % between 1 to 10 million, 2% is between 11-50 million, and 1% above 51 million.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Profile information		Percentage
Business Registration	Yes	39
	No	61
Location of the Business	Vavuniya	31
	Mullaitivu	24
	Kilinochchi	21



	Jaffna	15
	Mannar	9
Building	Resident	69
	Hired building	18
	organization's buildings	6
	Located in other places	7
Business ideas	Own	62
	Family	37
	Others	2
Market	Regional	81
	National	15
	International	4
Education	Ordinary level	68
	Advanced level	25
	Diploma	2
	Graduate	1
	Postgraduate	1
	Professional qualification	3
Businesses' investment	Below 0.5 million	87
	500,000-999,999,	7
	1 to 5 million,	3
	6 to 10 million,	1
	11-50 million	1
	Above 51 million.	1
Revenue	below 0.5 million	80
	500,000-999,999,	15
	1 to 10 million,	2
	11-50 million	2



	Above 51 Million	1
--	------------------	---

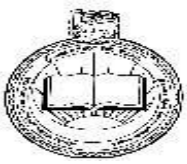
4.2. Exploratory factor analysis

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) checks the sample adequacy of the data. The KMO of this research is 0.900 which is presented in Table 2. The acceptable level of KMO is 0.5, which indicates that the factor analysis can be proceeded. The value of Bartlett's Test of sphericity is significant at 0.000, it shows the multi-dimensionality of the variable, which is suitable for the factor analysis.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.900
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4233.998
	df	465
	Sig.	.000

A total of thirty-six items were considered for the challenges of entrepreneurs. Initially, factors were loaded with 36 items. The five items were omitted during the factor loading. Two factors were not loading, they were "Business movement" and "Harassment in online business". Two factors with commonalities value lesser than 0.5 which were "Increased workload" and "Family members' permission". There was a cross-loading item which was the "Retaining business". After five items were deleted, the remaining thirty-one items were rotated. The Principal Component Analysis was applied to extract the components. The five factors were extracted from the rotation of items. The cumulative percentage of variance was satisfied with five factors 60.956% which satisfied the criterion of the total variance explained 60%.

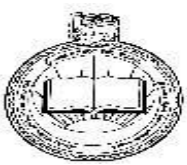
**Table 3: Matrix of Variance explained**

Description	Percentage of explained variance	Cumulative percentage of explained variance	Number of Items
Factor 1	29.228	29.228	10
Factor 2	9.750	38.981	10
Factor 3	8.740	47.716	6
Factor 4	7.104	54.821	3
Factor 5	6.140	60.956	2

The thirty-one items and the variables loading on these factors have been summarized in Table 4. The researchers used the principal component analysis as the extraction method. The five factors were derived by the varimax rotation. The reliability of the five factors is explained by the Cronbach alpha, above 0.7 with the acceptable limit, which explains the internal consistency of the construct.

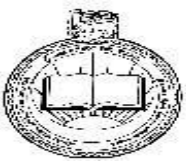
Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix

Factors	Items	Components				
		1	2	3	4	5
Gender Role and Culture	Maltreatment among suppliers	0.911				
	Family members do not understand my workload	0.819				
	The price of harvest is lesser	0.797				
	Recognition from society	0.781				
	Labors misusing working hours	0.735				
	Social expectations of entrepreneurs	0.733				
	Social expectations about my career	0.725				
	The difficulty for business movement as women	0.707				
	Stress due to workload	0.657				
	Rely on others due to security	0.514				



Business Sustainability	Export restriction		0.970			
	Challenges due to complex export system		0.896			
	Financial flow		0.825			
	Temporarily closure of business		0.820			
	License for import		0.698			
	Negotiation power for sale		0.650			
	Price for production lesser than male		0.619			
	Unstable market environment		0.560			
	Bulk procurement		0.533			
	Loss of confidence		0.516			
The lack of priorities and welfare program	Harassment in Online Business			0.749		
	The complex process of collecting fuel			0.707		
	Priorities to access services for women			0.698		
	Organizational support to address the challenge			0.628		
	No special scheme to protect Welfare			0.541		
	Affirmative action			0.512		
Raw materials	Raw material price fluctuation				0.832	
	Finding raw materials				0.788	
	Low cost of materials				0.736	
Marketing	Challenges in exportation					0.840
	Limitations to accessing the national market					0.678
Cronbach alpha		0.877	0.842	0.808	0.762	0.713

The first factor is “culture and gender role” which was explained as 29.23% of the variances. There are ten items namely, “Maltreatment among suppliers, Non-understanding workload by family, The price of harvest is lesser, Recognition from society, Laborers misusing working hours, Social expectations entrepreneurs can be male, Social expectations about my career, Difficulty for business movement as women, Stress due to workload and Rely on others due to security” which were loaded ranging from 0.911 to 0.514. The second factor namely, “business



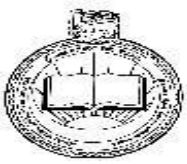
sustainability” consists of ten statements which are “Challenges due to complex export system, Financial flow, Temporary closure of business, License for import, Negotiation power for sale, the price for production lesser than male, Unstable market environment, Bulk procurement, Loss of confidence and Challenges due to export restrictions” which were loaded ranging from .970 to .516. The second factor is explained by 9.750% of the variance. The third factor, “Welfare programs” was described by 8.740% of the variance. This factor consists of six items namely, Harassment in Online Business, The complex process of collecting fuel, Priorities to access services for women, Organizational support to address the challenge, No special scheme to protect welfare, and Affirmative action, which are loaded with the loading ranging from .749 to .512. The fourth factor namely, “Raw materials” accounted for 7.104% of the total variance, this factor included three items which are “Raw material price fluctuation, Finding raw materials, and Low cost” with the loading ranging from .832 to .736. The fifth factor is named “Marketing” accounting for 6.140% of total variance, this factor consists of two statements namely, “Challenges in exportation and limitations to accessing the national market” with the loading ranging from .840 to .678.

4.3. Common bias method

The common bias method is tested by using the Harman one-factor test which deals with the construct of data which is collected from the same respondents (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). This research shows the cumulative percentage of explained variance is 60.956 % for the five factors. In addition, the variance of the fifth factor is 6.140%. This result shows that all factors account for a significant variance explained and one factor is not dominant in the construct. Hence, there is no common method bias in this data.

4.4. Convergent validity

This research includes five constructs. Convergent validity measures the correlation among the five constructs. According to Hair et al, (2014) factor loading value of the construct and items



should be more than 0.5. The factor loading of items in Table 4 seems to be above 0.5 and the correlation among the construct is also above 0.5 in Table 5. This research proves the convergent validity.

4.5. Discriminant validity

Hair et al., (2014), explained the discriminant validity as the extent of variation of construct among the dimensions of the variables. The discriminant validity is measured by the two methods in EFA. The pattern matrix is used to measure the discriminant validity, under which the items should be loaded under one factor only. The item loaded under the factors acceptable up to the level of 0.4; above that this level is called cross-loading and one factor was dropped. Another method to examine the discriminant validity is the correlation matrix of factors, which should not exceed 0.7(see Table 5). The correlation among the factors does not exceed the limit which proved the validity.

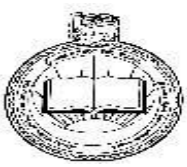
Table 5: Correlation Matrix among each construct

Component	Gender Role and Culture	Business Sustainability	welfare program	Raw materials	Marketing
Gender Role and Culture	1				
Business Sustainability	.524**	1			
welfare program	.481**	.396	1		
Raw materials	.442	.312**	.373**	1	
Marketing	.318**	.310**	.369**	.314**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

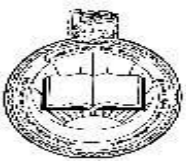
5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The present study examines the factors affecting the success of women-headed enterprises in the crisis environment in the Northern Province. Using exploratory factor analysis, the study explored the five major challenges of women entrepreneurs in the crisis environment. The



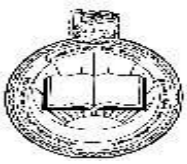
adopted quantitative method in this study helped the researcher to collect and analyse the data and then integrate the results and draw interpretations. The quantitative study validated the factors and helped identify to what extent those factors are deal with by women-headed enterprises. This research ensured that the five types of factors are significant for women entrepreneurs. Cultural factors have a high effect on the development of MSME, the second important factor is Business sustainability, the third important factor is the Welfare program, the fourth is Raw material and the last important factor is marketing.

Rubio-Banon & Esteban-Lloret (2016) supported this finding; Cultural factor is one of the major determinant factors of the success of women-led enterprises. Earlier researchers proposed major obstacles to women entrepreneurs as facing deep-rooted sociocultural challenges, particularly due to the patriarchal attitudes in society (Shastri & Pareek, 2019). Several studies show that the success of women entrepreneurs depends on the macro and micro variables in economics such as variables in the economies which stereotyping (marginalization), fear of failure (psychological), lack of education and training, socio-cultural boundaries, limited networks, legal and regulatory requirements and poor marketing strategies (Ahmed, Chandran & Klobas, 2017; Halkias et al., 2011; Nsengimana, 2017; Josiah & Themba, 2015). Furthermore, past literature also stressed cultural marketing factors as major challenges for entrepreneurs. Nsengimana (2017) supported that there is less weight on Government support, Raw materials, and Business sustainability as challenging factors in the previous studies; the Government can create platforms for female entrepreneurs to access large markets (Rajapaksha Pathirannehelage, 2018). Adikaram and Razik (2022) noted that limited understanding and support from family and society, challenges in balancing work and personal life, and legitimacy issues seem to hinder participants from launching and managing their businesses. According to Ranasinghe (2008), the success of women entrepreneurs largely relies



on their past experiences and the support they receive from their families. Selvarajan and Thayani (2022) noted that many women entrepreneurs face numerous challenges in running their businesses effectively, including financial constraints, limited institutional support, competitive pressures, marketing difficulties, shortages of raw materials and equipment, insufficient funding, lack of human resources, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to technology, insufficient government support, the burden of balancing dual roles, and the impact of the current economic crisis in the country. Raising capital to start or maintain a business remains difficult for women entrepreneurs. The above finding is also supported by Rao, & Mohan, (2016), who argue that because of negative perceptions of women entrepreneurs as lacking seriousness, women often get limited opportunities to access credit when compared to men; hence, they tend to resort to their inadequate personal savings and family loans to finance their businesses, and this results in inadequate stocking and restocking of supplies.

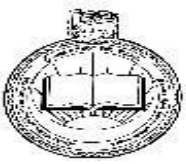
Gender role and culture: Women's specified roles remain constant regardless of age or generation. Male entrepreneurs do not have the same responsibilities inside the family as female entrepreneurs, aside from the role of breadwinner. There is also some additional stress from society regarding their gender role. In crisis time, it increases the workload of female entrepreneurs as it consumes more time to collect fuel for their family and business needs, getting the raw materials was a complicated process. The combination of all pressure caused a closer of business for some periods. Culturally, women are consistently subordinated by men in the Northern context. Even though they play very specific roles, are not treated equally in all spheres of society. The primary barrier in society is the notion that women are only capable of domestic work and not business. Thus, they restricted independence and had to ask either their father or, if married, their husband, for permission. Social expectations about the



women entrepreneurs have not favoured for them, they are struggling to balance their work and family life. Despite the challenges, women entrepreneurs have been succeeding in the business. However, they are negatively criticized by the community as they are irresponsible in their family role. Moreover, there is a common aspect that public sector employment is secure for women without disturbing their gender role. Men also dislike working under female entrepreneurs because it degrades them. If the female business owner is in charge of the company, the male employees do not follow her order on some occasions.

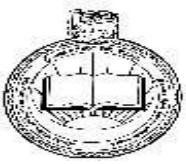
Business Sustainability: women-headed enterprises were struggling to find fuel for enterprises, shortage of raw materials, price hikes, and long power outages. Interruptions have become every day for businesses. Increased interest rates are another barrier and some private financial institutions ask a male collateral while giving a loan to women. A volatile business environment creates new problems for business owners. Increased labor wages are another problem and to retain women entrepreneurs whether the business is in operation or not. All the above factors lead to an uncertain business environment for women enterprises. Some of the firms were temporarily closed during the crisis time. Due to the uncertain business environment, women entrepreneurs are losing their confidentiality which is ascertained about their business sustainability.

Welfare programs : due to the consequences of the economic crisis, women-led enterprises are severely affected. The scale of the production was reduced. In the agriculture sector, even though women make up a significant role, there are gender gaps in the field. The economic crisis's consequences discourage women's involvement in the agriculture sector. Traditionally, this sector mostly relies on labor participation, which seems hard for female cultivators. Naturally, women seem physically unfit to do some agricultural work such as irrigation, land preparation, sowing, etc. While labor wages are rising drastically, the level of income remains the same. Women in the agriculture sector struggled to survive while men managed to continue



with their contribution. Women engaged in labor work create high production costs which leads to unfavorable income. Further women cannot have the same resource access and technological innovations as men. There is no special scheme or system to address the specific challenges of women and help to overcome their barriers. Affirmative action or welfare programs are essential to promote women's enterprises as they are often vulnerable to addressing some unexpected problems occurring in their business economic crisis.

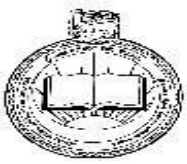
Raw Materials: High inflation in the country is caused by a shortage of raw materials as a result of supply chain interruptions rising salaries, and transport costs. Raw materials are important to meet the maximum level of demand. The high cost of raw materials is a barrier for entrepreneurs. Though it's a common phenomenon, finding cheaper and quality raw materials was a real challenge for women entrepreneurs in the crisis environment. Compared with their male counterpart they faced some sort of barriers in the crisis environment. Access to quality raw materials was possible for men as they didn't have control over their business movement. Women entrepreneurs need to get permission from family members for their business movement; they depend on others to collect cheaper and quality materials at the farm gate or production places due to the security reasons to access remote areas; and they face issues in fuel collection for their business movement. Thus, the shortage of raw materials and difficulty in arranging good quality raw materials at competitive prices were the major problems for them. In case of materials shortages, men manage to access raw materials due to their networking and negotiation than women. Moreover, due to the price fluctuation, the scale of production did not meet the adequate demand level as they feared to do bulk procurement. Raw materials prices also increased dramatically and remained high throughout the year and the following year.



Marketing: The foreign currency shortage has led to difficulties in importing raw materials and increased customs duty. To preserve foreign currency, the government restricted some imports; these import restrictions on some goods increased the production cost. Fuel shortages slowed the movement of goods throughout the island. Often interrupting the power supply was a big barrier to operating business. Transportation costs increased due to the fuel crisis which disrupted the supply chain. Due to the economic crisis, new policies and regulations interrupted the market system. Many women-headed firms are small-scale. They don't have a license for importing and exporting things. All the factors minimize or are barriers to accessing the national and international markets.

6. IMPLICATION AND LIMITATIONS

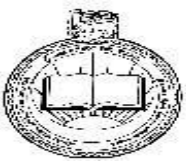
From a broad perspective, research contributed to gaining an understanding of the factors affecting women-led enterprises. The findings of the study are evidence to demonstrate the challenges in a crisis environment. Hence several implications shed light on the factors that affect women-headed enterprises. The results of this research are likely to have important implications for practitioners. The expectation is a better understanding of the problems and challenges of women entrepreneurs and the development of support systems to protect women entrepreneurs from unexpected challenges. The following recommendations were made based on the results of the study. First, women entrepreneurs require entrepreneurship training to develop and enhance their business skills and knowledge. This will help them in the areas of resilience building. Second, all governance and nongovernment agencies should address the specific challenges of women entrepreneurs and special privileges to access the resources and services considering their both family and business lives. This kind of support will empower



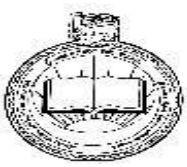
And motivate women entrepreneurs. This study contributed significant yield in the theoretical contribution beyond past studies and helped to create a comprehensive understanding of the research subject. As with all studies, there are limitations in this study too. These limitations need to be acknowledged. First, there is no uniformity among selected sectors and responses. A lack of statistical information leads to adopt convenient sampling rather than random sampling to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic; a larger sample may provide more significant results. But considering the time limits and resources it was impossible to do so.

REFERENCE

- Adikaram, A.S. and Razik, R., 2023. Femininity penalty: challenges and barriers faced by STEM woman entrepreneurs in an emerging economy. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 15(5), pp.1113-1138.
- Ahl, H. J. (2002). *The making of the female entrepreneur: A discourse analysis of research texts on women's entrepreneurship* (Doctoral dissertation, Internationella Handelshögskolan).
- Ahmed, T., Chandran, V. G. R., & Klobas, J. 2017. Specialized entrepreneurship education: does it really matter? Fresh evidence from Pakistan. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 23(1), 4-19.
- Alaydi, S. R. 2021. *Entrepreneurship and institutional challenges: disincentives or opportunities? Case studies in the Palestinian mobile phone sector* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow).



- Cetindamar, D., Gupta, V. K., Karadeniz, E. E., & Egrican, N. 2012. What the numbers tell: The impact of human, family and financial capital on women and men's entry into entrepreneurship in Turkey. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 24(1-2), 29-51.
- Chakraborty, T., Mukherjee, A., Saha, S., & Shukla, D. 2023. Caste, courts and business. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 212, 333-365.
- Fagenson, E. A., & Marcus, E. C. 1991. Perceptions of the sex-role stereotypic characteristics of entrepreneurs: women's evaluations. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 15(4), 33-48.
- Hair, J. F., Gabriel, M., & Patel, V. 2014. AMOS covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM): Guidelines on its application as a marketing research tool. *Brazilian Journal of Marketing*, 13(2).
- Halkias, D., Nwajiuba, C., Harkiolakis, N., & Caracatsanis, S. M. 2011. Challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Nigeria. *Management research review*, 34(2), 221-235.
- Hemachandra, D. W. K. 2022. *A framework for empowering women in disaster risk governance in Sri Lanka* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Huddersfield).
- Müller-Wieland, R., Muschner, A., & Schraudner, M. 2019. Academic entrepreneurship: phase-specific constraints and needs. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 13(3), 353-371.
- Muñoz, P., & Kibler, E. 2016. Institutional complexity and social entrepreneurship: A fuzzy-set approach. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(4), 1314-1318.
- Nimeshi, G. K. S., & Rodrigo, M. 2024. Barriers for Women Entrepreneurship Operating in the SME Sector Sri Lanka.
- Noguera, M., Alvarez, C., Merigo, J. M., & Urbano, D. 2015. Determinants of female entrepreneurship in Spain: an institutional approach. *Computational and Mathematical Organization Theory*, 21, 341-355.
- North, D. C. 1991. Institutions. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 5(1), 97-112.
- Nsengimana, S. 2017. *Challenges to women entrepreneurship in Kigali, Rwanda* (Doctoral dissertation, Cape Peninsula University of Technology).
- Podsakoff, P. M., & Organ, D. W. 1986. Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of management*, 12(4), 531-544.
- Rajapaksha Pathirannehelage . 2018. Challenges for Female Entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*.
- Ranasinghe, S. B. 2008. Factors contributing to the success of women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Advanced Social Studies*, 1(2), 85-110.
- Rao, G. S. N. G., & Mohan, R. 2016. Status of women entrepreneurship in India. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 5(5), 214-225.



Rubio-Bañón, A., & Esteban-Lloret, N. 2016. Cultural factors and gender role in female entrepreneurship. *Suma de negocios*, 7(15), 9-17.

Selvarajan, P., & Thayani, S. 2022. The Challenges faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Jaffna District of Sri Lanka.

Shastri, S., Shastri, S., & Pareek, A. 2019. Motivations and challenges of women entrepreneurs: Experiences of small businesses in Jaipur city of Rajasthan. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 39(5/6), 338-355.

SLEDB: Sri Lanka Export Development Board, <https://www.srilankabusiness.com/exporters/assisting-women-in-business.html> derived on 02.03.2023

Stevenson, L. 1990. Some methodological problems associated with researching women entrepreneurs. *Journal of business ethics*, 9(4), 439-446.

Surangi, H. A. K. N. S. 2022. A critical analysis of the networking experiences of female entrepreneurs: a study based on the small business tourism sector in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 11(1), 61.

Valliere, D., & Peterson, R. 2009. Entrepreneurship and economic growth: Evidence from emerging and developed countries. *Entrepreneurship & regional development*, 21(5-6), 459-480.

Verheul, I., Stel, A. V., & Thurik, R. 2006. Explaining female and male entrepreneurship at the country level. *Entrepreneurship and regional development*, 18(2), 151-183.

Welter, F., & Smallbone, D. 2008. Cross-border entrepreneurship in a transition context: conceptual and empirical perspectives. In *Conference: Nord Conference on Small Business Research 2008* (pp. 1-15).

Welter, F., & Smallbone, D. 2011. Institutional perspectives on entrepreneurial behavior in challenging environments. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 49(1), 107-125.

Yogendrarajah, R. 2019. Exploring the factors on micro and small women entrepreneurs' success in Northern Province of Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Accounting and Financial Reporting*, 9(1), 2162-3082.