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A Study on Women Entrepreneurs in Food Industry

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Abstract: ***Women have been involved in the food industry for centuries, playing essential roles in food production, processing, and trade. Women-led businesses also tend to prioritize community impact, empowering other women and marginalized groups through mentorship, employment, and inclusive practices. Despite their significant contributions, women entrepreneurs often face challenges such as limited access to funding, gender bias, and inadequate support networks. By fostering an enabling environment, we can unlock the full potential of women entrepreneurs, ensuring a more equitable and prosperous future for all. The objective of the study is to identify the factors influencing to start the food business, the problem faced by the women entrepreneurs in food industry and the level of importance for the women entrepreneurs in food industry. The uses both the primary data and secondary data also use convenient sampling method for the data collection. For the purpose of the study percentage analysis and weighted average score analysis has been used. The study concludes that Women entrepreneurs can continue to thrive and shape the future of the food industry. Their contributions not only benefit the economy but also promote social and cultural change, making their role indispensable in this dynamic sector.***
Keywords: Women Entrepreneur, Food, Business, Industry, Processing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and creating job opportunities across the globe. By breaking traditional barriers and challenging societal norms, they bring diverse perspectives and unique solutions to the table. Their ventures often address unmet needs, particularly in sectors like healthcare, education, and sustainability, contributing to social and economic development. Women-led businesses also tend to prioritize community impact, empowering other women and marginalized groups through mentorship, employment, and inclusive practices. This ripple effect not only strengthens economies but also promotes gender equality and social progress. Governments, organizations, and communities are increasingly recognizing the importance of supporting women entrepreneurs through policies, grants, and mentorship programs. By fostering an enabling environment, we can unlock the full potential of women entrepreneurs, ensuring a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

A. Statement Of The Problem

Women entrepreneurs have increasingly become a driving force in the food industry, contributing significantly to economic growth, food security, and community development. However, despite their growing presence and impact, women in this sector face a unique set of challenges that hinder their ability to scale their businesses and achieve long-term success. These challenges include limited access to financial resources, societal and cultural biases, lack of institutional support, and difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities. The food industry, which is often characterized by traditional practices and male-dominated networks, presents additional barriers for women entrepreneurs, making it difficult for them to compete on an equal footing. The problem is further exacerbated by the lack of awareness and access to government policies, training programs, and mentorship opportunities that could empower women entrepreneurs. Many women in the food industry operate small-scale businesses, often relying on traditional knowledge and local resources, but they struggle to formalize their operations or access markets beyond their immediate communities. This not only limits their growth potential but also restricts their ability to contribute more significantly to the economy. Understanding the perceptions, motivations, and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the food industry is crucial for developing targeted interventions that can support their entrepreneurial journey. This study aims to address these issues by exploring the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the food industry, identifying the barriers they face, and proposing strategies to enhance their business success and sustainability. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the broader goal of promoting gender equality and economic empowerment in the food sector. Hence, The researcher made an attempt to conduct a study on Women Entrepreneurs in food industry Coimbatore, Pondicherry and Chennai city.

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B. Objectives Of The Study

1) To identify the factors influencing to start the food business.
2) To study the problem faced by the women entrepreneurs in food industry
3) To know the level of importance for the women entrepreneurs in food industry.

C. Methodology Of The Study

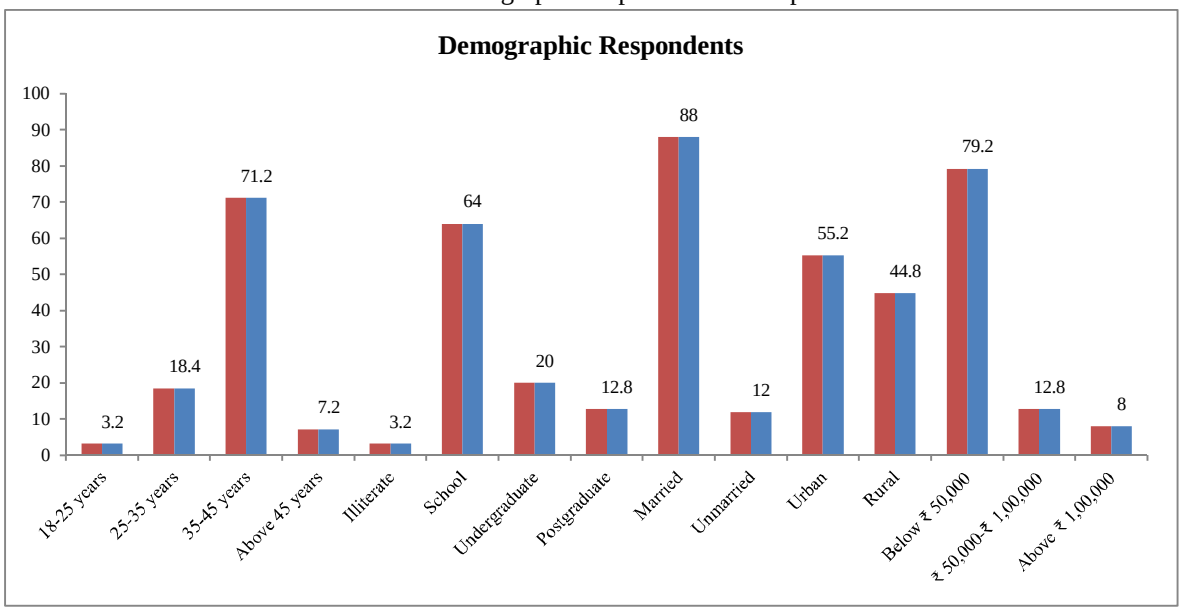
Area of the study	Women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry in major cities i.e. Coimbatore, Pondicherry and Chennai.
Sample size	125 respondents
Sources of data	Both primary and secondary data were used
Tool for Analysis	Percentage Analysis, Weighted average score analysis.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

More S. S (2025)[1], undertook a study on "Women Entrepreneurs in the Restaurant Industry: A Study of Economic Empowerment and Social Challenges". The study concluded that while women-owned restaurants contribute significantly to job creation and economic growth, challenges such as gender-based discrimination, work-life balance issues, and limited access to capital continue to hinder their progress. Dr. Kalpana Koneru (2024)[2], conducted a study on "Women Entrepreneurship in India - Problems and Prospects", to achieve economic independence, contribute to national development, and overcome socio-cultural barriers that have historically limited their opportunities. Sahi G. K. et al., (2023)[3], focuses on the "New product innovations in times of crisis: How did women entrepreneurs survive the covid - 19 crisis ? ". The study also states that resilience was more beneficial for industrial firms in introducing NPIs, while networking played a crucial role for consumer firms. Additionally, the interplay of resilience, networking, and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) significantly enhanced NPIs for both types of firms. Patel.K (2023)[4], a study "Family support and women entrepreneurship in the food industry". According to the findings of the study family support is a critical factor in enabling women to pursue and sustain entrepreneurship. Sutrisno et al., (2022)[5], focused on "Positioning Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises in Indonesia – Food & Beverage Sector", the study concluded that the women entrepreneurs are motivated by economic needs and family support, they often struggle with financial control, lack of confidence.

III. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Exhibit 1- Demographic respondents of the profile



From the above table out of the total respondents majority (71.2 %) of the women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry belong to the age group of 35-45 years, (64 %) of the women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry have studied up to school, (88%) of the women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry are married, (55.2%) of the women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry are residing in urban area and (79.2 %) of the women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry are in the income level below ₹ 50,000.

Table 2 - Obstacles faced by the Respondents

Obstacles Faced	Number of respondents	Percentage
Inconsistent product quality	23	12.64
Supply chain disruption	38	20.88
Customer dissatisfaction	37	20.33
Rise in raw materials price	54	29.67
Change in customer preferences	30	16.48

The study concluded that the most (29.67%) of the women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry are facing problem due to rise in raw material's price.

Table 3 - Opinion of Respondents towards various factors and their level of importance

Factors	Quality	Price	Transportation	Customer satisfaction	Offers & discounts	Customer feedback
Score	4.93	4.39	4.42	4.77	4.21	4.62
Rank	1	5	4	2	6	3

The study concludes that quality is highly important for the women entrepreneurs doing business in food industry (score = 4.93).

IV. SUGGESTIONS

The study suggests that understand what the customers want-healthy food, quick meals, traditional recipes, etc. Use good ingredients and maintain hygiene. Word of mouth is powerful in food business. Use social media to showcase your dishes, share recipes, and connect with customers. Stay updated with food trends, customer preferences, and new recipes or techniques. A signature dish or a special service (like home delivery or custom meals) can help to stand out. Keep track of costs, set a budget, and plan for growth which helps to improve it.

V. CONCLUSION

Women entrepreneurs are playing a transformative role in the food industry, driving innovation, sustainability, and economic growth. Despite facing challenges such as access to capital and gender bias, they are leveraging their passion, creativity, and resilience to build successful ventures. By addressing these barriers and capitalizing on emerging trends. Women entrepreneurs can continue to thrive and shape the future of the food industry. Their contributions not only benefit the economy but also promote social and cultural change, making their role indispensable in this dynamic sector.

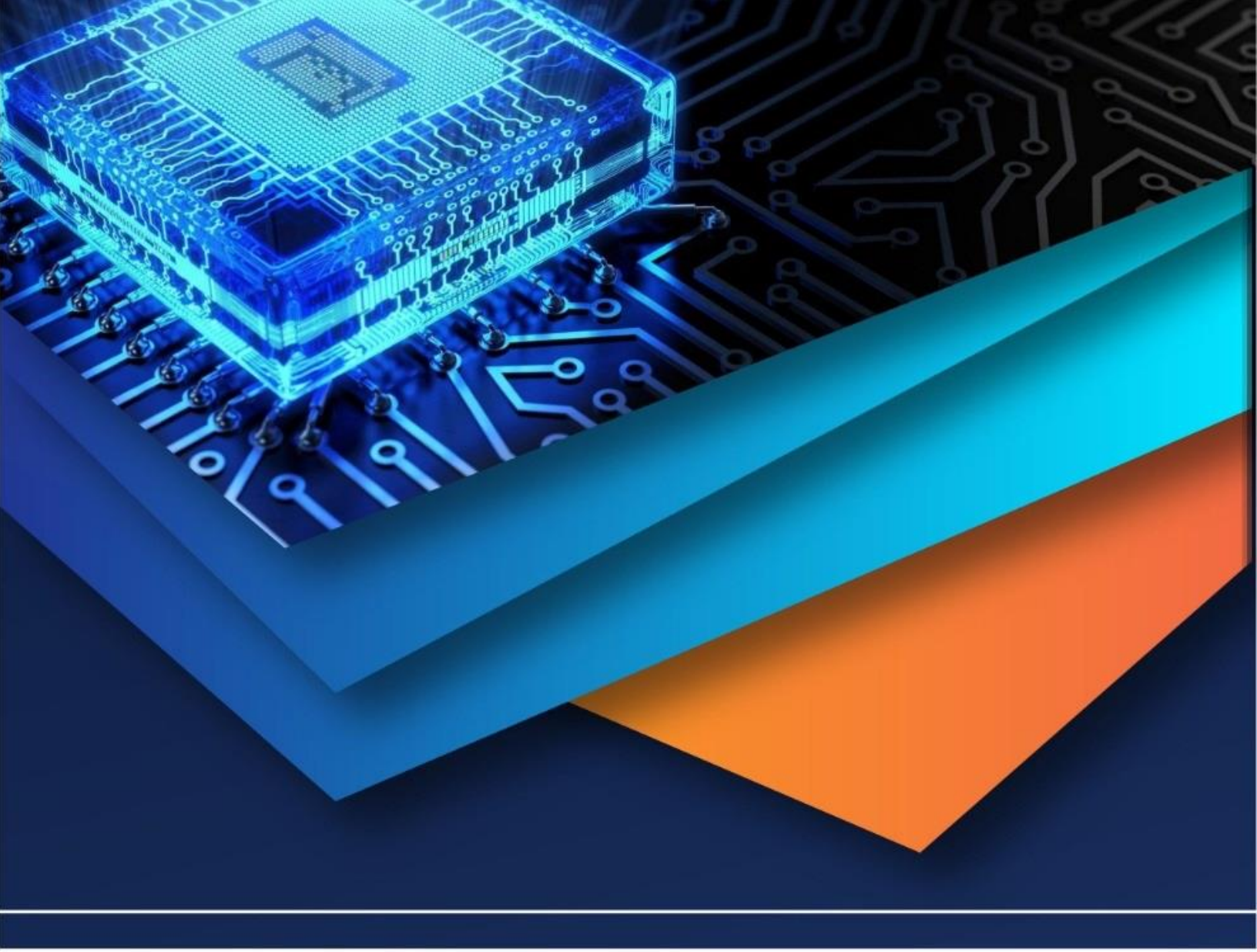
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