

ABSTRACT

Small and Medium-Size Enterprises (SMEs) contribute to the economy's growth in both developed and developing countries. Developing countries like Pakistan must prioritize their economic growth, development, poverty reduction, income generation, job creation, export expansion, import reduction, and promotion of new ideas and approaches to old problems. SMEs are the backbone of Pakistan's industry and women entrepreneur is in the initial stage. So, the purpose of this study is to investigate the start-up challenges such as gender discrimination, family responsibility, fear of failure, lack of insufficient market, lengthy documentation procedure, formal finance, and informal finance impact the empowerment of women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan. The descriptive research approach is used for the study since it is the most effective at determining difficulties. The study employed random sampling to collect information from 504 women entrepreneurs. The researcher obtained firsthand knowledge by distributing questionnaires. The data was entered into SPSS to apply descriptive statistics later. Gender Discrimination, family Responsibility, fear of failure, lack of insufficient market, lengthy documentation procedure, formal Financing, and informal Finance were discovered to make a significant contribution to enabling women-led firms in Pakistan. The study concludes that the main challenges facing women entrepreneur today in Pakistan are a lack of access to start-up capital and gender inequality. Women will achieve greater success if they can overcome the obstacles they face. **Keywords:** Gender Discrimination, Family responsibility, Fear of failure to lose in the business, Lack of insufficient market, Lengthy documentation procedure, Small and medium Enterprises; Small Enterprises; Formal Financial Sources; Informal Financial Sources; Women empowerment.