

# CHALLENGES OF SAUDI WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN CULINARY ART BUSINESS

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## ABSTRACT

*Women entrepreneurs play an important role in the economic development of any country. Saudi Vision 2030 aims to involve Saudi women in various aspects of the economy including entrepreneurship. Saudi women have been involved in various businesses as entrepreneur, including the culinary art business. The purpose of the study was to examine the challenges of Saudi women as entrepreneur in the culinary art business and to identify the availability of policies and programs that support Saudi women's entrepreneur in the culinary art.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Women Entrepreneurs, Saudi Vision 2030, Challenges, Barriers, Culinary art business, SWOT Analysis, Internal and External Factors.

## INTRODUCTION

Women Entrepreneurs are woman who own and run an enterprise. Saudi Women prefers to work in service sector like education, medicine, social services, due to their family responsibilities. Although they are choosing challenging careers to become financially independent including entrepreneurship. The data from General Authority for Statistics, in 2020 revealed that women in Saudi Arabia comprise nearly 50% of the population. As per the report of Ministry of Education, more women graduated from college in 2020. Saudi women received 61% of bachelor degrees in the country in 2020, still 83% of Saudi women who graduated were found unemployed in KSA, although some Saudi women participated in entrepreneurial efforts through their family business. In Saudi Arabia, women own 40% of family run companies, out of which 20% of the business were in the retail, contracting, wholesale and transferable industries sectors. Saudi women possessed 4% of the total registered businesses in the Kingdom out of which 5,500 women projects were found to have commercial registrations. The reports of World Economic Forum, 2020 ranked KSA at 148 of 153 world nations for female participation in economic activity. Although a vast improvement in women economic activity in Saudi Arabia was observed in past few years still women's labor force participation was found low. The General Authority for Statistics, 2020 revealed that the overall unemployment rate for women is 34.8% and for men is 11.5% in KSA. Through critical analysis on statistics on women entrepreneurs it was noticed that in culinary industry, under-representation of women existed, due to the masculine culture of the workplace and the industry. Hence the objective of present study was to develop a conceptual framework of challenges of Saudi women entrepreneurs in the culinary art business, to identify the causes of low participation of Saudi women as entrepreneur in the culinary art business and also to examine the availability of policies and programs that

support Saudi women's entrepreneur in the culinary art. The results of this study will be useful for all the young women who want to establish their career in culinary art in KSA.

### RESEARCH PROBLEM

Saudi Women comprised of 50% of the population in Saudi Arabia. Le Renard (2008) found that the Saudi women had fewer opportunities than men. They worked on farms, sewed clothes, wove wool, engaged in hand crafting and camel and did sheep breeding. Ba-Isa (2008) later observed that education became mandatory for women in KSA. Parker (2007) stated that more women were employed in KSA as female literacy rates increased by 71%. Almunajjed (2010) found that the unemployment rate among women with a bachelor's degree was 78%. To resolve the problem of unemployment of educated women, more women were encouraged to become entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. But due to cultural, religious and social barriers Saudi women faced various challenges. Allen & Mac Con Iomaire (2016); Berglund et al., (2017) stated that the women presence in culinary art business was quite marginal due to male dominance in the industry. Farrell (2016) observed that although women are excellent cooks in their domestic life but in professional life very few women in Saudi Arabia worked as cooks and chefs in hotel industry. From the relevant review of literature it was found that Culinary art business is male dominated, men in culinary profession are raised to the status of chefs and creators but there exists under-representation of women in the culinary industry in KSA.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To develop a conceptual framework of women challenges as entrepreneur in the culinary art business in KSA through SWOT Analysis technique.
2. To identify the availability of policies and programs that support Saudi women's entrepreneur in the culinary art in KSA.
3. To provide guidelines for women who want to establish their career in culinary art.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The type of study was exploratory in nature. Content analysis of previous research was done to develop the conceptual model of challenges of women entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia in culinary business. SWOT Analysis technique was used for analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of women entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia in culinary business. The SWOT analysis was chosen as the analysis method in this study because of its straightforward approach, flexibility, and useful output. Recommendations were included at the end of research to highlight the opportunities and supportive policies for Saudi Women in the Culinary art business shows in Table 1.

### RESULTS

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>SWOT ANALYSIS MATRIX: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN CULINARY ART BUSINESS IN SAUDI ARABIA</b>				
<b>S. No</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>

1.	The Kingdom's supportive policies and programs for women entrepreneur.	Low entrepreneur abilities and experience of Saudi Women in business of culinary art.	University education provides female students with adequate preparations for foundation and the development of new companies.	Obtaining the support of bankers, managing the working capital.
2.	Saudi women are well educated and financially powerful .	Women entrepreneurs fail to overcome the risks and troubles that come up in an organizational working due to lack of entrepreneurial aptitude.	Establishment of three pioneering bodies: 1.The Culinary Arts Authority of the Ministry of Culture. 2.The Saudi Academy for Teaching Culinary Arts; 3.The first Hospitality and Hotel Department programs. including culinary art for women opened at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University in 2018.	Severe and cut-throat competitions from organized industries.
3	Backup support of specialized and experienced persons.	Lack self-confidence for running an enterprise	Development of women entrepreneurship through skill development programs.	Non receipt of payment from customers on time.
4	Saudi Women are aspiring to be entrepreneurs.	Women face difficulty to strike a balance between managing a family and managing an enterprise.	Every year Saudi women are enrolling themselves for entrepreneur course.	Financial problem due to blockage of funds in raw materials, inventory, work-in-progress, finished goods.
5.	Saudi Women have Good communication and presentation skills	Women entrepreneurs do lack in setting plans in place for their business.	Learning new technology, new methods of production.	Prejudice or sexual harassment
6.	Policies for economic development of women under Saudi Vision 2030.	Mobility constraints	Marketing through Social media channels.	They have to depend on middle men which results in less sales and lesser profit.
7.	Government financial assistance through loans for women entrepreneurs.	Saudi women entrepreneurs face Social and Cultural Barriers	Digital resources.	Gender bias ;Male dominating Industry. Under-representation of women in the culinary industry .

## DISCUSSIONS

### Strengths

Change to- There are well educated, financially powerful women in KSA aspiring to be entrepreneurs (Almaeena, 2007). Saudi women have good communication and presentation skills. There exist adequate policies and programs that support Saudi women's entrepreneur in the culinary art in KSA. Women entrepreneurs in KSA get necessary backup support of

specialized and experienced persons. Government is providing support for women entrepreneurs in KSA by establishing policies for economic development of women under Saudi Vision 2030, designing and organizing skill development programmes and providing financial assistance through acquisition of loans.

### **Weakness**

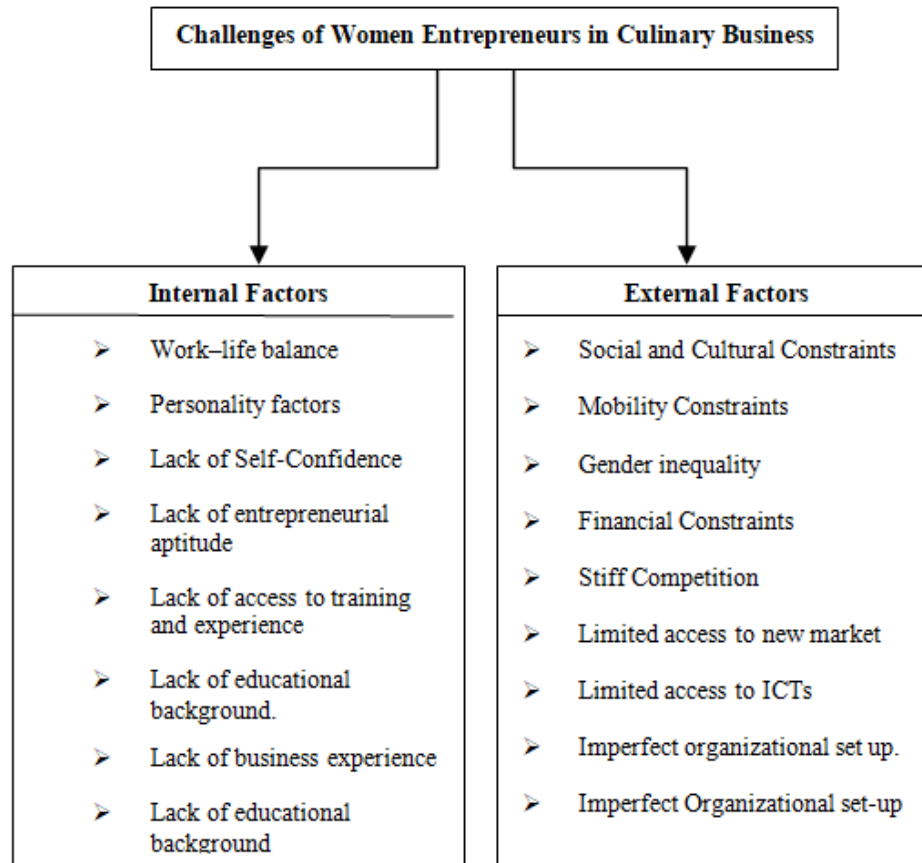
Women entrepreneurs lack self-confidence for running an enterprise successfully due to less entrepreneurial abilities and experience in business of culinary art. Even after attending various training programmes on entrepreneurship, they lack entrepreneurial aptitude. Most of the Saudi women entrepreneurs fail to overcome the risks and troubles that may arise in setting an enterprise. They have to work hard to strike a balance between managing business and a happy family life. Women entrepreneurs in KSA need to learn to plan their business to succeed as they lack proper skills to plan their business.

### **Opportunities**

University education provides female students with adequate preparations for foundation and the development of new companies. The Kingdom's policies and programs supported Saudi women entrepreneur in the culinary art by providing supportive environment through the establishment of three pioneering bodies: the Culinary Arts Authority of the Ministry of Culture, Saudi Academy for Teaching Culinary Arts "ZADK", which is a non-profit academy, top-quality and best-in-class culinary academy; Third is the first Hospitality and Hotel Department programs which including culinary art for women opened at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University in 2018. As a result, every year Saudi women are enrolling themselves for entrepreneur course resulting in increase in women entrepreneurs. Numerous opportunities are provided to women in learning new technology and new methods of production through skill development programs. With help of technology, Social media channels and digital resources women entrepreneurs can learn new ways of setting business.

### **Threats**

Insufficient financial resources and working capital are the basic obstacles for Saudi women. It is very difficult for them to obtain external finance due to their less tangible resources such as property and bank balance in their name. For some women, male members of their family do not trust on their entrepreneur capability and therefore, they do not want to invest their capital in the business run by the women. On the other hand, to make the business successful and also project themselves as successful entrepreneurs, women have to depend upon their personal saving and loans from family and friends. Obtaining the support of bankers, managing the working capital, lack of credit resources are the key problems for women entrepreneurs as they are still in the hands of males domain. Lack of networks due to social and cultural barriers also deprives women of exposure to good role models. Also Gender inequality exists in culinary industry in decision making between men and women in KSA (Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1**  
**CONCEPTUAL MODEL TO UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN**  
**ENTREPRENEUR IN CULINARY ART BUSINESS IN SAUDI ARABIA**

**The following challenges due to internal factors were identified**

It included work-life balance. Ainsworth et al. (2010); Reid & Wilson (2011) stated that one of the challenge of women entrepreneur in culinary business was work-life balance. Reid & Wilson (2011) stated that the kitchen workplace required more time investment which affected the social life of women entrepreneurs. This internal factor is supported by the findings of (Alkhaled & Berglund, 2018) who conducted interviews with female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia .Their findings revealed that women confronted with different ‘formal and institutional boundaries’ due to their family responsibility and household duties. Other internal factors included personality factors such as lack of self-confidence, lack of entrepreneurial aptitude lack of access to training and experience, less freedom using and exerting their leadership style, marketing skills, lack of business experience, lack of educational background. The above observation is supported by the findings of (Ortner, 1974) who stated that women chefs had less freedom using their leadership style because of gender roles and masculine culture of the hotel industry. Mahbub (2000) explained that few women were invited to join trade missions or delegations as individuals, due to the presence of men-dominated sectors in Saudi

society. UNECE in 2004 reported that women entrepreneurs faced prejudice, sexual harassment, and were restricted in their ability to travel to make contacts. Ball (2005) stated that employers in the restaurant business looked for women graduates with entrepreneurial abilities, good technical, business and interpersonal skills which they lacked. Hemmington (2008) stated that in Culinary arts, customers expected service delivery, service quality, favourable memories of events, functions or occasions, satisfactory meal experiences including food and drink, which was difficult for women entrepreneurs to meet due to their family responsibilities.

### **Challenges due to External Factors**

One of the external factor included Stiff Competition. Saudi women entrepreneurs extremely find it difficult to compete with the stiff competitions put forth by male counterpart as they face severe and cut-throat competitions from organized industries because enterprises owned by women do have imperfect organizational set up. Another external factor was Financial Constraints. Women in Saudi Arabia have insufficient financial resources and working capital. Due to their less credit worthiness creditors, financial institutes and bankers do not provide financial assistance to women borrowers. Due to blockage of funds and non-receipt of payment from customers on time they encounter financial problem. Male members of family do not trust on their capability to become successful entrepreneurs so, they don't want to invest their capital in the business run by the women. Saudi women have to depend upon their personal saving and loans from family and friends. Women in KSA have limited growth in business due to fewer business contacts, less bargaining power and less knowledge of governmental bureaucracy. Further most Saudi women entrepreneurs are generally not members of any professional organizations so they find it difficult to access information. The high cost of developing new business contacts and relationships is a big obstacle for women-owned businesses. They lack exposure to the international market; they lack knowledge about what is internationally acceptable. Many women entrepreneurs in KSA lack awareness about new technology, new methods of production, marketing, networking and other governmental support systems and policies. Another prominent challenge is Cultural Constraints. Women entrepreneurs in KSA face greater social barriers due to the traditions and customs prevailing in Saudi societies. Early marriage, lack of proper education, Resistance from the Saudi families, household responsibilities stop them from growing and prospering as entrepreneur. The other major challenge is Mobility Constraints. Women mobility in KSA is highly limited and has become a problem due to traditional values and limited driving skills. Women entrepreneurs in KSA are unable to market goods and services as they cannot run around for marketing, distribution and money collection so they have to depend on middle men for the above activities. Middle men tend to exploit them by adding their own profit margin which results in less sales and lesser profit. One of the major challenges of Saudi women in culinary business was found to be Gender Inequality. Most existing networks are male dominated and are not welcoming to women. Druckman, in 2010 explained that the under-representation of women in the culinary industry or gender bias occurred due to the masculine culture of the hotel industry. He confirmed that there existed low number of women cooks and chefs .Their findings showed that women in Saudi Arabia were legally excluded from a variety of jobs and have to seek permission from a male family member to start a business or even travel. Bourne et al. (2013); Cairns et al. (2010) also observed that there exists under-representation of women in the culinary industry. Cairns et al. in 2010 observed that in food industry gender roles and expectations exist. Pandey (2015) found

that gender inequality between women and men occurred due to lack of participation of women in the labour market, limited economic opportunities and less decision-making power. She suggested enhancing women entrepreneurship through skill development programmers and with the acquisition of loans and concluded that *“Entrepreneurship is the best way to empower women socially, economically and politically”*.

## CONCLUSION

The literature review suggested that there are various external and internal factors that act as challenges for women entrepreneurs in culinary art business. Therefore, a conceptual model was developed to understand how internal and external factors act as challenges for women entrepreneurs in culinary art business in Saudi Arabia. Internal factors included work–life balance, Personality factors such as lack of Self-Confidence, lack of entrepreneurial aptitude, lack of access to training and experience, less freedom in using and exerting their leadership style, marketing skills, Lack of business experience, Lack of educational background. External Factors included Stiff Competition, Financial Constraints, Limited access to new markets, Limited access to ICTs, Cultural Constraints, Mobility Constraints, and Gender Inequality and Lack of support from other women.

## Suggestions

1. There must be cooperative action among Saudi government, social and financial institutions in KSA to enable women entrepreneurs to successfully run their businesses. Women should be motivated to come out of their traditional occupation for accepting more challenging and rewarding career options. Supportive environment must be provided by the industry to enable women participation as entrepreneur in culinary art. Special incentives must be offered to women entrepreneurs who create employment opportunities for other women.
2. Entrepreneurial training must be provided to young women entrepreneurs by experienced persons. Women entrepreneurs must be helped in identifying and implementing the newly conceived projects. The department of food should impart training to women through its community canning and processing centers as well as mobile extension units. Women need to learn to plan their business to succeed. Entrepreneurial training must be provided to young women entrepreneurs who want to establish their career in culinary art business so that they develop sufficient skills to overcome their weakness and can face the threats of the industry.
3. Banks and other financial institutions must provide credit to women entrepreneurs on both priority basis and concessional terms. Term loans should be provided by financial agencies on liberal grounds. A new package of concessions, incentives and subsidies for promotion and development of women entrepreneurs must be introduced.
4. SWOT Analysis revealed that women entrepreneurs have adequate opportunities and strengths but there is a need to create awareness about the Kingdom's policies and programs in the culinary art for Saudi women entrepreneur to change the social and economic structure of the country.

## Limitations of the Research design and Methodology

1. The research is exploratory in nature and based on secondary data. Results are not based on actual survey.
2. Women Entrepreneurs in culinary art is analyzed through SWOT analysis, other sectors are not part of this study.
3. The development of conceptual model is based on content analysis of previous researches.

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