Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is a flourishing sector in the Maldives, with a significant number of women participating in such businesses to earn and support their livelihoods. It is a means by which women can become independent and alleviate their vulnerability in society by establishing financial stability. The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact these MSMEs have on women’s economic empowerment in Greater Male’ Region (GMR) and describe the challenges faced by women in the sector to maintain and expand their businesses. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with a total of 15 women, who owned a registered business in GMR, and common patterns in datasets were identified using a thematic analysis. Similar to the literature reviewed, women face several challenges in acquiring resources for business operations and face limitations due to cultural norms in the country. The findings of this research indicate that although factors of economic empowerment are not achieved to an acceptable extent, women in the country continue to overcome hurdles they face due to the financial benefits and individual autonomy they gain by being a part of this sector. This study will be an important addition to the lack of research and data on women in the MSME sector and the current challenges faced in achieving economic empowerment and full realization of the human potential.

Keywords: business, challenges, economy, equality, gender