

Women Entrepreneurship as an Inventive Approach to Ensure A Sustainable Development in Developing Economies.

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Abstract--The prevailing harsh environmental factors coupled with high poverty rate and unemployment propels a high rate of entrepreneurial activities in developing countries of the world. Women entrepreneurs operate within gender bias among other constraint that can constitute a threat or create opportunity for women entrepreneurs. This empirical paper investigates and critically examines women entrepreneurship as an inventive approach to ensure a sustainable development in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The study used descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean and percentages) to answer the two research questions posed. Hypotheses testing were done with Pearson Product Moment correlation and multiple regressions were employed in Data analysis. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software was used to run the analysis. Three hundred and fifty three (353) copies of questionnaires were administered, and one hundred and forty six (146) copies were returned. Consequently, the findings of this study portrayed a significant impact between Women entrepreneurship activities, job creation, wealth creation, youth empowerment, poverty reduction, employment generation and increase in standard of livings of people. The study therefore recommends that government should ensure that managerial lessons are accompanied with the skill acquisition programs in order for them to understand the rudiments of owning and sustaining a business. The study also recommends that women entrepreneurs that have overcome the inertia of starting a business should come together to create platforms that can help those women who are yet to take a step or kick-start such venture.

Keywords— Women entrepreneurs, skill acquisition, sustainability, and wealth creation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women all over the world play important roles in the social, economy and political life of any nation. Women entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations of the worlds stimulate the economy and create new jobs. Entrepreneurship literatures have increasingly acknowledge the desire by women to be economically independent, their roles and contributions as women entrepreneurs in shaping labour market is continuously increasing (Mordi, Simpson, Satwinder and Okafor, 2010) in Lamidi (2013).

Investing in women is very necessary and important as the output cannot be overemphasized. Recently, for ensuring sustainable development, involvement of women is very crucial. Golla (2010) opined that investing in women is recognized not only as the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do. Mounting evidence demonstrates that the increase in women income leads to improvements in children's health, nutrition and education. Therefore, in present day scenario, sustainable development of women is considered as a land mark of progress for any country; hence the economic sustainability of women is of at most importance to social scientists, economists, policy makers, reformers and NGO's. Tripathi (2014).

Women entrepreneurs are faced with so many challenges despite their numerous contributions to the sustainable development of the economy. Factors such as gender discriminations, cultural beliefs, inability to access bank facilities, discouragements in attaining a certain position, among others hinder the activities of women participation in the economy. According to Kuratko and Welsch (1994) in Ocholah, Okelo, Ojwang, Aila and Ojera (2013), women entrepreneurs have long felt that they have been victims of discrimination. Various studies examined the types of discrimination and some have been attempted to document them. Aliyu (2013) viewed that cultural beliefs and traditions still remain as obstacles for women in developing economies, Nigeria inclusive. Nigeria holds conservative values and traditional customs in doing business activities. For instance, entrepreneurial activity or business is recognized to be an occupation of men, whereas women should stay at home for domestic activities. Therefore gender discrimination and culture hamper women entrepreneurial activities and thus affect economic development and growth negatively.

The table below shows the gender of owner-managers in sectors and number of women in entrepreneurial business in different sectors of businesses.

Table 1
Gender of Owner managers (Sole proprietorship) in sectors

| Sector | Male Numb er | Male perce ntage | Fe mal e Nu mb er | Femal e perce ntage | Total |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|
| Agriculture, Hunting, forestry, & fishing | 488 | 92.31 | 41 | 7.69 | 529 |
| Mining and Quarrying | 96 | 98.15 | 2 | 1.85 | 98 |
| Manufacturing | 3,565 | 93.09 | 265 | 6.91 | 3,830 |
| Building & Construction | 83 | 97.37 | 2 | 2.63 | 86 |
| Wholesale, retail, repair of motor vehicles | 2,576 | 89.51 | 302 | 10.49 | 2,878 |
| Hotel & Restaurant | 1,099 | 76.56 | 337 | 23.44 | 1,436 |
| Transport, storage & communication | 386 | 97.26 | 11 | 2.74 | 397 |
| Financial intermediation | 256 | 92.86 | 20 | 7.14 | 276 |
| Real Estate, renting, Business activities | 468 | 90.67 | 48 | 9.33 | 516 |
| Education | 687 | 62.12 | 419 | 37.88 | 1,106 |
| Health & social work | 1,377 | 89.43 | 163 | 10.57 | 1,540 |
| Other community, social and personal services | 301 | 62.77 | 179 | 37.23 | 479 |
| Total | 11,383 | 86.43 | 1,787 | 13.57 | 13,169 |

Source: National MSME Collaboration Survey 201

a). Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to critically examine women entrepreneurship as an inventive approach to ensure a sustainable development in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

The specific objectives are:

- To examine the impact of the activities of women entrepreneurs on the poverty level in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.
- To ascertain the level of women entrepreneurs activities by way of job creation, wealth creation and the crime reduction in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

b). Research Questions

To realize the above mentioned objectives, the following questions were posed.

- How does women entrepreneurs' activities contribute to poverty reduction?
- To what extent do women entrepreneurs activities contribute to wealth creation, job creation and reduction of crime in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?

c) Hypotheses

In other to answer the two research questions posed for the study, the following hypotheses were formulated in a null form.

- *H01*: There is no significant impact between the poverty level and activities of women entrepreneurs.
- *H02*: There is no significant effect between women entrepreneur's activities, job creation, wealth creation and crime reduction in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship means establishing ones own business. UNDP define entrepreneurship as the process of using private initiative to transform a business concept into a new venture or to grow and diversify an existing venture or enterprise with high growth potential. The developing countries, Nigeria inclusive introduced an economic reforms which was targeted to transform all the sectors of the economy. The reform was meant to impart positively by creating employment opportunities, empower women and bring sustainable development. But all proved to be abortive instead it engendered unemployment and poverty.

Entrepreneurs are important agents of change in every society, yet they present the most enigmatic characters in the drama of economic development, particularly in the less developed world. Although it is an entrepreneur's purposive activity that brings the gap between plan and reality, the precise way that this agent of change acts is often unpredictable. Website.

Women Entrepreneurs And Their Challenges

Women entrepreneurs are women that have interest, courageous even to take the risk of being independent. A woman entrepreneur contributes positively to economic growth. Tripathi (2014) opined that a woman who can accept challenges, adventures and the urge to become economically independent can transform into an Entrepreneur. Women empowerment and economic development are closely related: in one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women ;in the other direction, empowering may benefit development. Duflo (2012)

Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are enormous. The beliefs that women in developing countries are “**second class citizens**”. Women are being looked down in all ramifications such as

-Cultural and traditional beliefs for instance the Muslims of the Northern part of the country do not easily allow their wives to participate in public activities.

-Gender discrimination for instance, as concerns education, men are usually trained first. This is applicable in the remote areas of South East Zone of Nigeria (Igbo tribe) forgetting that when you train a woman, you train the nation.

-Family Role.: The role women play in their families cannot be overemphasized. Starting from pregnancy, delivery, infancy of the child and other household activities.

-Difficult in accessing fund.

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The study critically examined women entrepreneurship as an inventive approach to ensuring a sustainable development. The focus of the study was on women entrepreneurs from some selected Local Government Areas (LGA) of some States in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria representing the Igbo tribe. Three (3) local government areas in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria which comprises of Nnewi North, Oru West and Udi local government areas of Anambra State, Imo State and Enugu State respectively were studied.

a) Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design. The purpose of using descriptive survey was to collect detailed and factual information that describes an existing phenomenon. Data was collected based on the concepts defined in the research model and hypotheses tested. The study relied on primary and secondary data. The study conducted analysis on three hundred and fifty three (353) respondents from each local government area, but eventually got one hundred and forty six (146) respondents from both local governments. Women entrepreneurs from Nnewi north local government being more responsive and more apt to the concept of entrepreneurship granted more responses. The purpose was to discover the various levels of entrepreneurial acumen developed by each woman, in order to see if those women have a concept of business start-ups, development and growth in line with their business.

b) Population of the study and sample size

Oyesiku (2010) described the population of any work as the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate.

It therefore follows that unless the total population is explicitly defined before the actual work, it is difficult if not impossible to evaluate the adequacy of the selected sample. Consequently, the population of this study is 3000 women entrepreneurs from three local government areas (MSME, 2013).

- Three hundred and fifty three women entrepreneurs from the three local governments afore mentioned were serve copies of questionnaires and one hundred and forty six usable copies of questionnaires were returned from all of them

c) Method of Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and graphs were used for the analysis of the research questions while hypotheses testing were done with Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regressions were employed in data analysis. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software was used to run the analysis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05% level of significance. At 5% level of significance, reject the null hypothesis for test with probability estimates lower than 5% (0.05) and conclude that they are statistically significant. Otherwise, we accept 0.05 (when probability estimates are above and conclude that there is no overall statistically significance).

d) Sample Size Determination and Data collection procedures
The number of women entrepreneurs sampled in this study is as presented in the table below.

Table 2

| Local government | Total population | Total no sampled |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Nnewi North | 1300 | 63.4 |
| Oru West | 700 | 34 |
| Udi | 1000 | 48.6 |
| Total | 3000 | 146 |

Source: field survey 2013

IV. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Of the 353 copies of questionnaires distributed to respondents from each local government, a total of 146 completed copies of questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of about 41.3%. The researchers were able to collect the copies of the questionnaires from the respondents because it is a convenient sampling which made the respondents available and easily accessible.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 4 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are women entrepreneurs from Nnewi north local government.

Of this number 63.4 respondents or 43.3% are in Nnewi north, 23.3% in Oru West and 33.3% in Udi local government. In addition their marital status showed that 71.2% were married and 19.2% were single.

Table 3:
Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------|------------|
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 28 | 19.2 |
| Married | 104 | 71.2 |
| Divorced | 4 | 2.8 |
| Widowed | 10 | 6.8 |
| Total | 146 | 100 |
| Educational status | | |
| No Basic Education | 10 | 6.8 |
| Primary education | 30 | 20 |
| Post primary | 62 | 42.4 |
| Tertiary, HND & Equivalent | 48 | 30.3 |
| Total | 146 | 100 |
| Desire to further education | | |
| No for now | 75 | 51.3 |
| Yes | 32 | 22 |
| Already in a programme to further my education | 39 | 26.7 |
| Total | 146 | 100 |
| Age | | |
| 21-25 years | 32 | 21.9 |
| 26-35 years | 44 | 30.1 |
| 36-45 years | 40 | 27.4 |
| 46-55 years | 22 | 15.1 |
| 56 years and above | 8 | 5.5 |
| Total | 146 | 100 |

Source: Field survey 2013

6.8 percent of the respondents have no basic education while 20 percent has their primary education.

a) Analysis Of Research Questions

Research question 1: How does women entrepreneurs activities contribute to poverty reduction?

Table 4:

| s / n | Variable | SA | A | U | D | SD | Remarks |
|-------|--|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|
| 5 | Entrepreneurs activities has the prospect of eradicating poverty in society with rising unemployment | 60 (41) | 43 (29.5) | 10 (6.9) | 20 (13.7) | 13 (8.9) | Strongly agree |
| 6 | Entrepreneurs provides good and adequate preparation for starting up and growing new firms | 73 (50) | 38 (26) | 17 (11.6) | 10 (6.9) | 8 (5.5) | Strongly agree |

Source: Computation from SPSS 17 Analysis

Questionnaire item 5 and 6 were used to address the research question one. The responses to research question one was shown in table 10 above. The study shows that women entrepreneur activities have the prospect of eradicating poverty in the society with rising unemployment. This is evident from the results which indicated that 41 percent of the respondents were in strongly agreement that women entrepreneurs activities eradicates poverty; provides start-up fund for new firms, and provides training and knowledge skills necessary to empower unemployment.

Research question 2: To what extent do women entrepreneur activities contribute to wealth creation, job creation and crime reduction in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?

Table 5:

| s/n | Variable | SA | A | U | D | SD | Remarks |
|-----|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| 8 | Entrepreneurs activities in the long run increases the gross domestic product of nation otherwise called wealth creation | 34 (23.3) | 67 (45.9) | 12 (8.2) | 18 (12.3) | 15 (10.3) | Agree |
| 9 | Women entrepreneurs activities can be a catalyst for engendering peaceful society and economic development | 68 (46.6) | 40 (27.3) | 21 (14.4) | 8 (5.5) | 9 (6.2) | Strongly agree |

Source: Computation from SPSS 17 Analysis

Research question two is directed at determining whether entrepreneurship activities assist in sustainable wealth creation and job creation. Questionnaire items 8 and 9 were used to analyze research question two. 45.9 percent of the respondents were of the view that entrepreneurship activities can bring about wealth creation; serves as a catalyst for engendering peaceful society and economic development; as well as for business incubation and co-operatives. The result shows that most respondents believe that the adoption of entrepreneurship activities among women will enhance sustainable wealth creation.

b) Test of Hypotheses

Table 6:

| Hypot he sis | Sum of squares | Degree of freedom | Mean square | f-value | R ² | Sig value |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|---------|----------------|-----------|
| 1 | 22.427 | 4 | 5.607 | 16.790 | .323 | <0.001 |
| 2 | 27.312 | 4 | 6.929 | 10.736 | .233 | <0.000 |

Source: From Analysis Result of field survey 2013

Table 5 above showed the Regression analysis used to test all the hypotheses.

- *H01:* There is no significant impact between the poverty level and activities of women entrepreneurs.

Women involved in entrepreneurship have improved the level of comfort of their families; enjoy better health care and skill acquisition, so encouraging women to start businesses would increase the level of educated children. Interpretation of result-the result from the table above revealed the extent to which the variance in poverty level can explained by the activities of women entrepreneurs is 32.3% i.e. (R²sq= .323) at $p < p < 0.001$

- *H02:* There is no significant effect between women entrepreneur activities, job creation, wealth creation and crime reduction rate in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

The results from the table above revealed the extent to which the variance in crime rate can be explained by the activities of women entrepreneurs is 23.3% i.e. (R square=.233) at below 0.000 significance level. The significance level below 0.000 implies a statistical confidence of above 99% which implies that the activities of job creation by women entrepreneurs have a significant effect on crime reduction rate in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. We therefore reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect between women entrepreneur activities, job creation, wealth creation and crime reduction.

A. Discussions on Results And Findings

- From the finding of the research work, question 5-7 of the research questions were used to identify the impact of the activities of women entrepreneurs on the poverty level in Anambra, Imo and Enugu States of Nigeria The test for the hypotheses on using regression indicates that the activities of women entrepreneurs affect poverty level at 32.3% of variance and 0.001 significant levels. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis. This means the more women engagement in entrepreneurial activities the greater the decrease in poverty level. This answers the research question one and is in line with the first objectives of the study.
- Questions 8-10 of the research questions were used to identify the impact of the activities of women entrepreneurs on the level of crime reduction, job creation and wealth creation in Anambra, Imo and Enugu state of Nigeria. The test for the hypotheses on using regression indicates that the activities of women entrepreneurs affect poverty level at 23.3% of variance and 0.000 significant levels. Therefore we accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. This means that the more women engagement in entrepreneurial activities the greater the decrease in crime level rate and higher the wealth creation and job creation.

V. CONCLUSION

The objective of this research is to critically examine women entrepreneurship as an inventive approach to ensure a sustainable development in developing economies. Therefore, based on the data analyzed and results obtained, the conclusions of this study are discussed: The future of Nigeria is in its women active involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Investing in women therefore, is a wise choice. Hence the government should lay a solid foundation by encouraging the education of female children, and reduce the stereotype bias against female children. The government can also establish more training centers including vocational centres for women to acquire skills. In order to enhance productivity and produce goods of global repute, the government must organize platforms that would sensitize women on the need for continuous self- development and capacity building. Since a woman not having transforming education, which is education beyond secondary level, is of substantial proportion (43.2%) in the study area, government should ensure that managerial lessons are accompanied with the skill acquisition programs in order for them to understand the rudiments of owning and sustaining a business.

The study also recommends that women entrepreneurs that have overcome the inertia of starting a business should come together to create platforms that can help those women who are yet to take a step or kick-start such venture.

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