

Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs: The Nigeria Experience

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Abstract

Women entrepreneurs are the central force for entrepreneurship development. They contribute 60% to nation's GDP. However, women entrepreneurs face several challenges in their business operations. It is on this note that this paper investigates challenges of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Both primary and secondary data were utilized for the study. The findings from empirical studies reveal that women face many challenges such as financial constraints low level of education, inadequate management experience, lack of information, inadequate infrastructural development etc. The study concluded that the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the country should be addressed in order for them to contribute significantly to the economic growth of Nigeria.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, challenges, economic growth, unemployment, poverty

Introduction

Women entrepreneurs are vital to the economy development, poverty and unemployment reduction of a nation. They have roles to play in the social, economy, and political life of any nation.

Women in traditional African economy form the primary producers especially in agriculture food processing including both the preservation and storage product and that of marketing and trading surpluses of vital household items. Women are also involved in activities such as weaving, spinning and several hand crafts. (Kpelai, 2009).

According to Jejenywa (1995), women are at the heart of economic development and economic growth as they control most or the non-monetary economy (subsistence agriculture, bearing children, domestic labour and so on) and play an important role in the monetary economy as

well as trading, wage, labour employment among others.

UNESCO (2002) stated that women form high percentage of the population and they have come a long way in businesses, politics, education, sport and other profession. However, women entrepreneurs suffer a lot of challenges and inhibition which militate against them in the country.

Hence, this study is aimed to find out the challenges of women entrepreneur in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to

- i. review literatures on women entrepreneur\
- ii. examine challenges of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria and;
- iii. recommend solution to challenges of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The role of women entrepreneurs in economic development, poverty and unemployment reduction in developing countries has been asserted in many studies on women entrepreneurship,

Patel (2002) illustrated how women entrepreneurs have utilized their entrepreneurial skills to become

economically independent and provided economic support to the family through on entrepreneurship.

Mayoux (2004) noted that women entrepreneurs are simply women that participate in total entrepreneurial activities, who take the risks involved in combining resources together in a unique way so as to take advantages of the opportunity identified in their immediate environment through production of goods and services. Most of them are involved in micro small and medium scale enterprises (MSMES) which contribute more than 97% of all enterprises, 60% of the nation's GDP and a 97% of the total share of the employment (Ndubusi, 2004). The spectrum of women in entrepreneurship often ranges from home-based businesses (HBB) to micro, small and medium (MSEs) (ILO, 1998).

Okafor et. al (2010) opined that women possess dual characteristic (For instance they are firstly women and secondly entrepreneurs). Therefore, women entrepreneurs possess characteristics which include adaptability (Killby, 1968), innovativeness/ creativity (Schumpeter, 1934, Drucker, 1985), strength and internal locus of control (Annenkova, 2001), ability to think and reason fast and endure

(Mayoux, 2001), managerial skill, accountability and credit risk.

Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria

The Women entrepreneurs face several challenges in their business operation as shown by various studies from time to time. (Mattis, 2004, Nichter & Goldmart, 2009).

Veena (2008) highlighted some of the challenges of women entrepreneurs. They are:

- i. Problems at work
- ii. Problems at home
- iii. Problems with husbands
- iv. Socio-Economic challenges
- v. Personal challenges and;
- vi. Other strategic challenges

ILO (2003) argued that the challenges of women entrepreneur are:

- i. Government polices
- ii. Lack access to appropriate business development support
- iii. Financial constraints and;
- iv. Family problems

According to Yusuf (2013), women entrepreneurs are confronted with two key challenges gender and cultural beliefs. Agboola (2011) viewed gender and cultural beliefs among other factors that influences

people's willingness and ability to venture into entrepreneurial activities, they continued that within the cultural context, there are sub culture like regional, ethnicity and religious that shapes individual's perception and value system.

Harkiolakis and Caracatsams (2011) believed that gender and culture belief impede the economic potential of women as entrepreneurs and impact negatively on enterprise development productivity and competitiveness.

Carter (2001) and Mordi et. al (2010) stated that lack of human and external resources for business start up, government policies, lack of assets, lack of information lack of access to training, socio cultural factors and low levels of education are several challenges facing women entrepreneurs.

Methodology

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to women entrepreneurs at Odo-Ogbe market in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. All hands were on deck to ensure that the accurate number distributed to respondents were collected accordingly.

Results and Discussion

The results of the findings from sources of finance and challenges of women

entrepreneurs in Nigeria are illustrated in table 1 and 2 below:

Table 1: Sources of Finance

	Frequency N = 120		Percentage = 120	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Sources of start-up capital				
Bank loan	10	110	8.33	91.67
Own savings	108	12	90	10
Borrowing from family and friends	68	52	56.67	43.33
Government incentives	42	78	35	65
Other sources	26	94	21.67	78.33
Sources of Working Capital				
Bank loan	24	96	20	80
Own Savings	110	10	91.67	8.33
Borrowing from family and friends	46	74	38.33	61.67
Government incentives	42	78	35	65
Other sources	10	110	8.33	91.67

Source: Fieldwork, (2014)

Table 2: Women Entrepreneurs' Challenges in Nigeria

Challenges	Frequency N = 120		Percentages = 120	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Political trends	66	54	55	45
Socio-cultural influences	74	46	61.67	38.33
Lack of Technological Advancement	74	46	61.67	38.33
Lack of Policy enforcement	68	52	56.67	43.33
Corruption of government official	82	38	68.33	31.67
Problem with financing	92	28	76.67	23.33
Lack of ability to take calculated risks	74	46	61.67	38.33

Inadequate management experience	96	24	80	20
Bank policy and bureaucracy	82	38	68.33	31.77
Government’s attitude towards entrepreneurship	96	24	80	20
Lack of infrastructural facilities	82	38	68.33	31.67
Lack of access to training	76	44	63.33	36.67
Family responsibilities	66	54	55	45
Lack of Information	55	5	91.67	8.33
Low level of education	54	6	90	10

Source: Fieldwork, (2014)

The results of findings show that majority of the respondents attest to the fact that women entrepreneurs face serious challenges which include socio cultural influence, lack of technological advancement, lack of policy for entrepreneurship, corruption, government’s attitude towards entrepreneurship, political trends, financial constraints, bank policy and bureaucracy, lack of infrastructural development, low level of education, family responsibility, lack of access to training etc in their business operation.

Conclusion

The study investigates the challenges facing Nigeria entrepreneurs at Odo-ogbe market, Ile-Ife, Osun State. It reviews literature on women entrepreneurs and challenges facing women entrepreneurs.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The study concluded that challenges facing women entrepreneurs should be addressed in order for them to contribute significantly to the economic growth of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Having highlighted the challenges of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria, the paper recommends as follows:

1. Government should make policies that will positively enhance the accessibility of women entrepreneurs to the required funds and help this business support organizations improve their services towards women entrepreneurial development.
2. Government should empowerment by training and development skills

- on business opportunities for women.
3. Government should provide institutional policy framework that target women entrepreneurship development; capability building programmes on business for women entrepreneurs in Nigeria.
4. The three tiers of government should provide tax relieve to women entrepreneurs in form of tax cut or tax rebate to help lessen multiple tax burden.
5. Government should provide aggressively infrastructural development such as water, electricity, roads, and security to reduce cost of doing business in Nigeria.
6. Enterprise network, NGO and so on should provide advice, counseling and training for women entrepreneurs.
7. Women entrepreneurs should strive to break through socio cultural and development barriers with great determination, perseverance and genuine desires to conquer their challenges.
8. Government should promote positive images of women and women entrepreneurs, in particular as partners and contributors to economic growth and development.

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