

FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS EXPERIENCES AND BUSINESS SURVIVAL: EVIDENCE FROM SELECTED FEMALE VENTURE OWNERS IN REMO COMMUNITY, OGUN STATE

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Abstract

Women have not been fully recognized to be at the edge of socio-economic transformation and political development of any economy which invariably affected their power in the area of business start-up. In Nigeria, female entrepreneurs have not been given adequate opportunity and support towards their entrepreneurial pursuit especially in Remo. This has been attributed to perceptual-error, poor family support and ethno-socio-cultural dictates. It is in this view that the study examined if the female entrepreneurs are able to survive in their entrepreneurial pursuit. Purposive sampling technique was used to administer questionnaire to 100 female entrepreneurs in Remo, Ogun state. Data were collated and analysed using simple linear regression analysis. The study concludes that gender disparity, poor family support, and socio-cultural dictates affect the survival of female entrepreneur's business. The study recommends that female entrepreneurs should be given an enabling environment and adequate support to enable their businesses thrive.

Keywords: *Female Entrepreneur, Family Support, Business Survival, Socio-cultural factors, Gender Stereotyping*

Introduction

In developing countries, the concept and practice of entrepreneurship has been embraced by both academia and professionals as a result of its effect on the economic development and growth of nations. The female folks have correspondingly embraced this phenomenon as many have started out their own business. Globally, there has been bolstering emphasis on female entrepreneurship in light of tangible evidence of the importance of new business creation for economic growth and development (Bergmann, Müller & Schrettle 2014; Lock & Lawton-Smith 2016). The inputs of female entrepreneurs in innumerable aspect of different economies have been the catalyst orchestrating the agitation not to underestimate the female-entrepreneurial capability. In light of the micro and individual contributions of female entrepreneurs, to various economies both in the formal and informal sectors, Usman, Umami & Fuadah (2016) identified their huge impact on economic growth and development. Hence, female entrepreneurship development has become necessary to economic analysis and family welfare discourse as nations strive to achieve growth. Consequently, any obstacle or neglect tends to impede such development which requires serious attention. While the paper is not addressing gender-related discourse or feminism, it looks at the instrumental role of female entrepreneurs in ensuring business survival.

In Nigeria, females constitute more than 50% of the population and amongst this; only about 35% are involved in entrepreneurship which are grouped under the form of micro, small, medium and large enterprises (Odoemene, 2003). Despite the number of females in Nigeria in terms of physical population, educational, economic and social status, they are not well represented during policy making process, especially in issues of business and manpower development due to perceptual-error or stereotype. Culturally, the female entrepreneurs have not been on an equal footing when it comes to access to opportunities and assets, and contextually addressing the barriers facing women in business (Athanne, 2011) has been an emotional debate. Moreover, female entrepreneurs in Nigeria are faced with a myriad of obstacles and challenges, and the lack of support from government and non-governmental agencies further exasperate their effort.

Many females enter self-employment for control over their life and schedules, which create more control and balance over their work and family life than they have experienced in other careers (Adkins, Samaras, Gilfillan, McWee 2013; Chlosta, Patzelt, Klein & Dotrmann, 2012; & Purvis & Bobko, 2012). Highly experienced and educated women left their employment as a result of job dissatisfaction for entrepreneurship opportunities (Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014). These women who are motivated by their desires, leave top paying jobs and managerial positions to create new opportunities, new challenges, self-determination desires, and balance of their personal life and work experiences (Krishnamoorthy & Balasubramani, 2014; McGowan et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, the dynamic nature of Nigerian environment has triggered changes that include the recognition of the potential of females and their contribution to the economy (Okafor & Mordi, 2010). It is in light of this that the study seeks to examine the extent to which female entrepreneur are able to ensure their survival in their entrepreneurial pursuit. As such, it looks

at gender stereotypes, family support and socio-cultural factors effect on business survival among female entrepreneurs in Remo, Ogun State. The proposition is that gender inequalities can translate into gender inability to manage which leads to poor choices in management of organization. The work is structured into four main parts after the introduction; literature and theoretical review, methodology, data analysis/presentation, and conclusions/recommendations.

Literature and Theoretical Review

Empirical discourse resonates with core gender development issues within household and societies that involvement and participation of women lead to economic growth and engender gender equality. While no straightforward theory that economic development helps reduce inequality, the paper assumed that creation of economic growth brings together more opportunity for all. Hence, lack of support, stereotype and context cultural factors affect females which further influence the survival of female-owned business. In light of these, conceptual, theoretical and empirical reviews were conducted along prior research and relevant literatures on the variables under study.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is recognized as an integral component of economic development and a crucial element in the effort to lift countries out of poverty (Wolfenson, 2001). Entrepreneurship is a driving force for economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction in developing countries. According to Sauser (2005), it is a means through which accelerated economic growth and rapid industrialization have been achieved which Harris et al., (2006) sees as engine of industrialization. In a similar approach, small scale business has been recognized as a feeder service to large scale industries (Fabayo, 2009). This makes small scale business the efficiency-parameter or economic growth energizer of nations.

Female entrepreneurs around the world contribute numerous ideas and a great deal of energy and capital resources to their communities and generate jobs as well as create additional work for suppliers and other spin-off business linkages (Common Wealth Secretariat, 2002). From this perspective, the female entrepreneur is the main factor in the creation of economic wealth and endogenous to household and societal welfare. Therefore, incorporation of women entrepreneurs to wealth creation and management increases the physical wealth, job creation and survival of business. This would facilitate the possibility for women to be able to make effective choices by their own and their resources.

Theoretically, feminism is the theory that advocates that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially (Offen, 1988). Feminism has formed the core of the feminist theory and by addition the core of studies on gender equality in entrepreneurship (Kutunis & Bayraktaroglu, 2003). According to feminism theory, society is based on a hierarchical patriarchy of power in which males hold superior economic and social opportunity than females do (Kendall et al., 2004) and as such giving male entrepreneur more support than their female counterparts. In addition, economic utilitarian theory has a say in inequality and considers women as key underutilized resources. In optimizing and

maximizing the potential of female entrepreneurs triggers positive spin-off effect of increased income levels for women and their families and so the socioeconomic changes that it creates.

Gender Stereotyping

The perceptual imbalance has created cultural aptitude and stereotype that predetermine an appropriate behaviour, economic role, and practices for women. This stereotype is behind social exclusion or discrimination on managerial roles and women involvement. Entrepreneurial activities in most countries are recognized to be male dominated especially in the developing countries, like Nigeria. The ratio of female entrepreneur to male entrepreneur varies significantly across the world as men are seen to dominate such areas (Lituchy & Reavly, 2004). Female entrepreneurs operate within gender bias among other limitation that can constitute a threat or create opportunity for female entrepreneurs (Eren, 2012). Female entrepreneurs are often marginalized to the informal sector, nevertheless, the ability of female entrepreneur to formalize and grow their business to create jobs and enhance productivity is hampered where barriers exist that affect male and female entrepreneurs differently.

Even though there has been a spectacular rise in female entrepreneurs in recent years in most countries (Acs et al., 2005; Allen, Elam, Langowitz & Dean, 2008), men are still more probable to create businesses and have greater entrepreneurial orientation as compared to their female counterparts (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Mueller & Dato-on, 2011). Gender stereotype is considered to be the social hegemonic beliefs about the characteristics and attributes associated with each sex (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Powell & Graves, 2003). Categorizing people using gender stereotypes is a universal practice, as it allows to swiftly sorting them into two groups –men and women– using prominent visual and physical characteristics (Gupta & Bhawe, 2007).

Abimbola and Agboola (2011) in a study, environmental factors and entrepreneurship development in Nigeria findings show that gender is a force found to be capable of either impeding or facilitating entrepreneurial activities in any society. The issue of gender factor affects women entrepreneur positively and negatively, depending on the economy and nation. Balachandra, Briggs, Eddleston and Brush's (2013) study, a gender-aware framework for women's entrepreneurship in Nigeria; the study revealed that the postulation about male versus female entrepreneurs and their respective ventures, venture capitalists will likely favor the pitches of male entrepreneurs over those of their female counterparts when evaluating entrepreneurial pitches. Bonte and Piegler (2012) suggested that gender roles affect the competitive nature of small business owners. However, the ideas of male business owners may produce the most positive indications of business success according to research, but understanding strategies women use to gain success in business may influence more positive views of women-owned small businesses (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Shaver, 2012).

The social role theory elucidates why male and female tend to behave according to the stereotypes associated with the social roles they occupy. The theory takes account of the descriptive norms, which are consensual expectations about how male and females actually conduct themselves, and injunctive norms, which are the consensual expectations about how

male and female ought to behave or ideally should behave (Eagly & Karau, 2002). While descriptive norms reflect stereotypes of men and women, injunctive norms add a prescriptive element.

Socio-Cultural factors

A good number of female owned SMEs are faced with the challenges of which has been attributed to the recent changing business environment which is entangled with power of complex socio-cultural, economic and technological factors creating intricate challenges for owners of SMEs in Africa (Felicia, George, Owoyemi & Adegboye, 2013). Cultural values are the vital ingredient towards the success of entrepreneurship as it influences the behaviors of people in a society and more deeply rooted cultural values can also be linked to entrepreneurship (Turker, 2009). Hofstede (2001) distinguishes between several cultural indicators, including power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term versus short-term orientation. Of these dimensions, power distance, individualism and uncertainty avoidance have been studied in relationship to entrepreneurship (Wennekers et al., 2002).

Females also face social and cultural barriers, because the overall perception in society is that a woman's main duty is to be a good housewife and mother. Females are also often perceived as weak, passive and irrational (Schein & Mueller, 1992). However, he assumes that women because of their family responsibilities feel safer, if they can stay at home and avoid public activities. Discrimination is another social cultural factor that may hinder women participation in entrepreneurial activities. The Liberal feminists theory posit that female can rationalize and solve problems as effectively as male, but they are deprived because of their lack of experience, lack of management training, lack of financing as well as the presence of segregation and social inequities (Byrne & Fayolle, 2010).

Inhibiting Factors is concerned with barriers and challenges faced by female entrepreneurs as a result of socio-cultural factors (Greene, Hart, Gatewood & Brush, 2005). Brush (1997) identified several obstacles, including: women not being taken seriously; child and dependent care responsibilities; lack of growth and expansion capital; and lack of entrepreneurial education and training. On the other hand, she found that opportunities for women entrepreneurs improved with the use of technology, and that management style, and employee policies could also be positive contributors to growth.

Family Support

Businesses end up mixing with the family or vice versa and this arises when one partner is engaged in a business that occupies a lot of time, causing less time to be shared with her partner and children, or when some family members work in a business, which generates conflicts and affects the coexistence of all (Avolio, Dulanto, Augusto & Arbulú, 2013). Females more than males depend on the support of the family, friends and other important people in their lives while deciding to venture into business and it has been shown that although, women and men had similar commitments to business; women devoted much more time to domestic work and child care than men (Diaz, 2007). Juggling jobs and families can

result in a work-family conflict that can harm psychological well being of the female entrepreneur. It was discovered that female entrepreneur are fulfilled with being in business and do not necessarily experience conflicts between their social, family and leisure lives (Hanifa et al, 2011).

However, they are still confronted with barriers when starting their own business ventures. These barriers mainly come from society/traditions, family/personal reasons, and lack of support. There's usually a small leisure gap for this entrepreneur making it difficult for them to create time for business necessities and measures. They also do little or no feasibility studies and the effect of these is the fear to step out and establish their own businesses. Females who are supported financially to start up their business ventures tend to do better than those who are not financed. The family usually provides advice and support to them on the start of a business enterprise, running and growth and growth of the business in their early stages of their life (Mwania, 2015).

However, the findings of Brush et al, (2009) revealed that many families prefer to support and finance males in business than females and only well-established families will be able to offer financial support for females. Jakaand Mateja (2013) in a study, the role of husbands: support or barrier to women's entrepreneurial start-ups? The study revealed that majority of women who started their own businesses feel that in the first year of their entrepreneurial pursuit that the emotional support of their spouse was a major push towards their business survival.

Female entrepreneurs require information, capital, skills, and labor to start business activities. While they hold some of these resources themselves, they often complement their resources by accessing their contacts (Aldrich, et al., 1991; Cooper, Folta, & Woo, 1995) hence the emergence of the social network theory. Aldrich et al. (1991) in the social network theory made essential distinctions between the content and relevance of men's and women's networks. They described women's networks as organized around spheres of work, family, and social life. Women's networks are largely similar to men's networks in terms of activity and density. However, men reported that their networks included very few women while women were more likely to include men in their networks (Aldrich, 1989). Focusing on social network analysis turns attention to *relationships* between entrepreneurs and others that provide the resources that are important in establishing a business (Johannisson, 1988; Larson, 1991). Female entrepreneurs get support, knowledge, and access to distribution channels through their social networks. Entrepreneurs are also linked to people and organizations that interact among themselves and these contacts can widen the availability of resources that sustain a new firm (Hansen, 1995). Women business owners benefited from family connections because they lack access to financial capital and social resources (Powell & Eddleston, 2013).

Business Survival

Studies in entrepreneurship have analyzed the relative survival duration of female-owned businesses and male-owned businesses. However, the results have been inconsistent. Some

studies have found that female-owned businesses survive for shorter periods than those owned by men; these studies have often associated these differences between men's and women's traits, skills or preferences as an explanation. Other studies have found no difference in survival duration between female-owned businesses and male-owned businesses (Kalnins & Williams, 2014). Female entrepreneurial success provides a significant competitive advantage for small businesses, a place where women outpace men (Chamorro-Premuzic, Rinaldi, Akhtara, & Ahmetoglu, 2014). Female-owned businesses tend to be smaller than male-owned businesses (CB, 2012; DOC, 2014). Despite the economic impact, women business owners lack the strategies needed to succeed in business for more than 5 years. The small business rate of survival is less than the rate of failure (Alsaaty, 2012). When businesses fail, job losses, and reduced tax revenue for the federal, state, and local government occur (Joshi, Prichard, & Heady, 2012). Many smaller businesses fail because of mismanagement and misappropriation of resources and opportunities (Alsaaty, 2012).

Methodology

The study used the descriptive survey research design to solicit information from respondents. Data was collected through the primary source of data collection. The research instrument was administered to female entrepreneurs in Remo community (consisting of Ode-Remo, Ilisan-Remo, Ikenne-Remo, Iperu-Remo, Remo-North), Ogun State. The purposive sampling technique was used to randomly select 100 female entrepreneurs ranging from food vendors, fashion designers, hairdressers and photographers which are the major business female entrepreneurs in Remo communities venture into.

Adjustments were made to the research instrument after carrying out the face and content validity. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5 was treated as an additional evidence of convergent validity, the construct validity of all variables involved in the study were therefore ascertained. Discriminant validity was also assessed by comparing the AVE with the squared correlations between the two constructs and was less than the AVEs, which suggests that the constructs were distinct. The reliability of the instrument was also established using the cronbach alpha analysis test for internal consistency which from 0.78 to 0.90. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, A, B and C. Section A covers the information about the respondent's bio data, which includes; Marital status, Number of outlets, Years in Business. Section B and C elicited response from respondents in order to provide solutions to the research questions. Section B consists of 3 sections: (i) gender stereotype (ii) Socio-cultural factors (iii) Family support while section C covers: (i) Business Survival. Six points rating scale was used to measure the response. The scales ranged from 6 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). Data analysis was carried out using the simple linear regression analysis via statistical package for science solutions (SPSS). The operationalization of the variable under study is explained below;

$$Y=f(X)$$

$$Y=f(x_1, x_2, x_3)$$

Where Y= Business Survival

X=Female Entrepreneur, proxies as;

x_1 = Gender stereotype

x_2 = Family Support

x_3 = Socio-cultural factors

μ = error term

Simple linear regression models were created to denote the functional relationship between business survival and the sub-variables of female entrepreneur's experiences

$$Y=\alpha_0+\beta_1x_1+\mu\text{-----Eqn 1}$$

$$Y=\alpha_0+\beta_1x_2+\mu\text{-----Eqn 2}$$

$$Y=\alpha_0+\beta_1x_3+\mu\text{-----Eqn 3}$$

The *apriori* expectations are that with p value of < 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected while the alternate hypothesis will be accepted. In order to ensure anonymity of the respondents, the researcher ensured that names and other personal details that can be traced back to the respondents were not sought for or documented anywhere in the study. Also, in the course of carrying out the research, the researcher ensured that considerable efforts were put in place to ensure the confidentiality of data collected as well the identities of the subjects that provided information for this study when reporting the outcome of the study.

Results and Discussions

Profile of the respondents revealed that 100 of the respondents were female representing 100% since the study is centered on female entrepreneurs. 35 respondents had their business venture existing between 1-5years representing 35%, 43 respondents for the period of 6-10 years representing 43%, 10 respondents had the business venture running for 11-15years representing 10%, 9 respondents for 16-20years representing 9% while 3 respondents have had their business running for over 20years representing 3%.

30 respondents were single representing 30% while 70 respondents were married representing 70%. 30 of the respondents attested that their peak period was between Jan.-April representing 30%, 33 respondents between May-August representing 33%, 37 respondents between Sep.-Dec. representing 37%.

The paper looks at gender stereotype along its significant effect on the business survival among the surveyed female entrepreneurs. From the statistical results, it becomes evident that the model was robust in light of the F-value of (2.736).

Model	R	R ²	Unstandardized Coeff.		T	F-value	Sig.	Std. Error of the Estimate
			B	Std. Error				
1 (Constant)	0.505	0.255	19.980	2.392	8.353	2.736	.000	1.96848
Gender			0.296	0.179	1.654		.137	

Source: Field study, 2018

From the regression results in Table 4.1, it was revealed that a unit change in gender stereotype will lead to 0.296 increases in business survival. The result also indicates that a statistically positive relationship exists with the $R^2=0.255$, $F=2.736$, $p<0.05$. This implies that gender stereotype does not necessarily affect business survival of the female entrepreneur. Contrary to the findings in other empirical works (Nosek, et al., 2002; Watkins & Watkins, 2001), the results show that gender stereotypes has no effect on business survival. However, it is related to the findings of Abimbola & Agboola (2011) that state in their work the irrelevance of gender to business survival. The study further explained that whether an entrepreneur is a male or female has no effect on their business survival but emphasizing the personality of the entrepreneur has a significant effect on their business survival.

Further, the paper looks at family support effect on business survival with the results demonstrating that the $R^2 = 80\%$ and $F\text{-value}=33.359$, and $p<0.05$ indicates a high degree of fit.

Model	R	R ²	Unstandardized Coeff.		T	F-value	Sig.	Std. Error of the Estimate
			B	Std. Error				
1 (Constant)	0.898	0.807	34.285	1.843	18.604	33.359	.000	1.00291
Family Support			0.466	0.081	5.774		.000	

Source: Field study, 2018

The regression results in Table 4.2 showed a statistically positive significant relationship exist between family support and business survival. A unit increase in family support will lead to 0.466 increases in business survival. The findings revealed shows family support has a significant effect in business survival which upholds the findings of (Greene, 2000; Taniguchi, 2002) that family support, spousal support relates positively to business' survival. The findings of Brush et al, (2009) revealed that many families prefer to support and finance male

in business than females and only well-established families will be able to offer financial support for females.

Also, the paper looks at socio-cultural factors and its effect on business survival with results indicating a high level of robustness and good fit.

Model	R	R ²	Unstandardized Coeff.		T	F-value	Sig.	Std. Error of the Estimate
			B	Std. Error				
1 (Constant)	.439	.192	31.133	5.353	5.816	1.905	.000	2.04939
Socio-cultural			1.333	.966	1.380		.205	

Source: Field study, 2018

The statistical result in Table 4.3 shows that the value of R²=19.2%, F-value=1.905, p< 0.005 signifying a statistically significant relationship. The result revealed that a unit increase in socio-cultural factors will lead to a 1.333 increase in business survival. The research results indicate that socio-cultural factors have no effect on business survival. This view diverges from the empirical studies reviewed (Carter et al., 2003; Carter et al., 2001), which explain the emphasis that socio-cultural factors influence the survival of a business venture.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical findings and analysis, the study concludes that gender stereotypes have no significant effect on business survival of female entrepreneur. The study also concludes that family support has a significant effect on business survival of female entrepreneur. However, socio-cultural factors were seen not to have a significant effect on the business survival of female entrepreneur. The study further revealed that aside the socio-cultural factors that significantly affect female entrepreneur survival, it was also discovered that female entrepreneurs lack adequate strategies to enhance their survival.

Recommendations

The study made recommendations based on the findings;

Female entrepreneur should be given equal support as with their male counterparts. The gender factor should not be viewed as a survival strategy as many female entrepreneurs are as successful in ensuring survival of their business ventures as their male counterparts. The study recommends that family support and socio-cultural factors should be considered a viable business survival strategy. Other variables which could be considered for further research are financial support available to the entrepreneur and the support of the family.

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