EFFECTS OF GENDER AND CULTURAL BELIEFS ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

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Abstract—The study assessed the effects of gender bias and cultural beliefs on growth of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Gender and cultural dimensions such as restricted access to education, finance, ethnicity, religion and societal perceived roles of women were investigated. The effects of these factors on women entrepreneurial activities is worth studying because entrepreneurship is considered as an important aspect of economic development of both developing and developing nations. The researchers adopted descriptive survey design in a quest to obtain necessary information for the study. 380 women entrepreneurs in three states, North Central Nigeria were purposively selected and investigated. The findings of the study show that women in Nigeria are affected by a number of cultural factors that impede the growth and development of their entrepreneurial intentions. The study presented a picture of some gender bias and culture related barriers that women must overcome to be able to establish new businesses or expand existing ones.

Keywords—Gender Bias, Cultural Belief, Women, Entrepreneurship.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women all over the world play significant roles in the social, economic and political life of any country. New jobs are stimulated and created by women in both developed and developing economies. Women entrepreneurial motivation is empirically associated with several factors. Eijdenberg & Masurel (2013) opine that people in developing countries are mostly driven by poverty, survival and lack of jobs to become entrepreneurs, while in the developed economies, entrepreneurial activities crop out of exploitation of an opportunity and innovation to start a business. Entrepreneurship literature have increasingly acknowledged the drive by women to become economically active and independent and their contributions have significant effects on the labour market in economies of the world (Mordi, Sinipson, Satwinder & Okafor, 2010). The identification and exploitation of business opportunities by women and their male counterpart is a function of both individual characteristics and environmental forces, (Isidore & Razli, 2011). Despite the role played by individual characteristics in determining women entrepreneurial intentions, however, recent studies have shown that business environmental factors such as economic, financial and socio-cultural beliefs, play a greater role in the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities by women entrepreneurs (Kuzilwa, 2005; Shastr & Sinha, 2010; Vob & Muller, 2009). In the views of Kuzilwa, (2005), Shastr & Sinha (2010), all conditions for exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities such as education, experience and energy may exist, but the environmental constraints such as credit and societal discrimination and religious believes especially in developing economies, may hinder the entrepreneur. Gender bias and cultural beliefs are seen to be instrumental in the entrepreneurial growth of women in most developing nations (Abimbola & Agboola, 2011; Harkiolakis & Caracatsanis, 2011; Lamidi, 2013). Abimbola & Agboola (2011) identified sub-cultures within the cultural context such as regional, ethnicity and religion as key elements that shape individuals’ perception and value system towards entrepreneurship. For instance, an enforcement of seclusion rules upon married women (Pudah) according to Hugo (2012) Muslim states and South East Asia countries affect women entrepreneurial engagement. In support of this view, Harkiolakis & Caracatsanis (2011) opined that gender bias and cultural beliefs hamper economic potentials of women as entrepreneurs and impact negatively on development of enterprise, productivity competitiveness and reduce economic growth. Issues of gender discrimination, particularly in developing economies, occasioned by socio-cultural factors have significant influence on entrepreneurial engagement of women (Otero, 1999). Researchers have identified these gender-related issues to include areas of distribution of social wealth such as finance, education, and health (May, 2007; Mayou, 1999; Otero, 1999; Porter & Nagarajan, 2005; Roomi & Parrot, 2008; Isidore & Razli, 2011; Vob & Muller, 2009).

In Nigeria, the socio-cultural system is gender discriminatory. The traditional belief about the position and role of women do not allow women to engage in serious economic activities and thus place a limit on the entrepreneurial engagement of women in Nigeria. Akpor-Robaro (2012) believed that the culture of the major tribe; Hausa-Fulani-still presents a woman as an indoor person who is forbidden to interact publicly particularly with the male. Keeping with the culture therefore, prohibits women from most parts of the North from entrepreneurial engagement. This practice has great impact on women entrepreneurship. Even within the Southern part of Nigeria which is predominantly occupied by...
the Igbo women seek paid employment, their Igbo counterpart, who are educationally less privileged, resort to self-employment to realize their economic empowerment and independence motives.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM
The thrust of the study is to investigate the effects of gender and cultural practices on women entrepreneurship in developing economies, particularly Nigeria. A number of entrepreneurial literature have actually increased our understanding of entrepreneurs, gender and cultural dynamics, but the fundamental concern is the focus of most studies on developed economies to the neglect of developing nations. The study seeks to investigate the effects of gender bias and cultural dimensions such as education, access to finance, ethnicity, religion and societal values on the growth of women entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study
The primary purpose of the study is to assess the effects of gender bias and culture on the growth of women entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Hypotheses
1. There is no significant correlation between women education, financial access and women entrepreneurial performance in Nigeria.
2. There is no significant correlation between ethnicity, religion and women entrepreneurial performance in Nigeria.

III. METHODOLOGY
The study surveyed women entrepreneurs in three states in North Central geo-political zone of Nigeria; Benue, Kogi and Kwara States. The population of the study comprised of women entrepreneurs in the states who were involved in agricultural, small scale manufacturing, service and trading sectors of the economy. The participants for the study were selected on a convenience basis due to timescale, proximity and cost efficiency to represent the three major tribes resident in the selected states. Purposive (maximum variation) sampling was used in selecting the sample size because of its ability to provide variation of perspectives ranging from typical conditions to extreme ones that are of interest to the researcher.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
The investigation of the influence of women education as gender bias factor on growth of women entrepreneurship in Nigeria showed a significant impact with a mean score of 4.0594. This is closely followed by the impact of family responsibilities as women with 4.0312 mean score. Traditionally, women are seen to be involved simultaneously in several activities. These activities among others include mothers, housewives, economic drivers, entrepreneurs etc. Lack of access to finance on the other hand, ranked third with a mean score of 3.7375. On the question of the influence of culture on women entrepreneurship in Nigeria, ethnicity/tribe affiliation scored high with a mean of 3.6125. This was closely followed by lack of cultural support for creativity and excellence with a mean score of 3.5750. Responding to the question of religious influence on women entrepreneurship, a mean score of 3.3375 was arrived at.

Table I: Summary of correlation coefficient between gender bias factors and growth of women entrepreneurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lack of education greatly affect my business</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My household responsibility as a woman affects my business</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lack of access to finance has a great effect on my business</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Growth WE</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table I shows the extent of correlation between gender bias and growth of women entrepreneurs. Household responsibilities of women has the highest coefficient of r = 0.26. This is closely followed by lack of education with a correlation coefficient of r = 0.19 while lack of access to finance has a coefficient of r = 0.17.

Table II: Summary of correlation coefficient between cultural factors and growth of women entrepreneurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Religion has an impact on the kind of business I do</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ethnicity influences the choice of my business</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Our culture and value system do not excite creativity and excellence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Growth of WE</td>
<td></td>
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Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The coefficient of the correlation of variable in the table indicates moderate positive relationship between cultural factors and performance of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Three items were invested
under the cultural factors; religion, ethnicity and cultural values on creativity/excellence, with \( r=0.2, r=0.21, r=0.18 \), correlation coefficients respectively. The discussion of results of the study is guided by the hypotheses raised in the introduction and tested in this section. The arrangement of the presentation follows the order of the hypotheses formulated for the study. The findings on the effects of gender bias on women entrepreneurship showed positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This result support findings of Klein (1993) and Adeyemi (2013) that women entrepreneurs perceive gender bias as a very real obstacle in raising resources for entrepreneurship. This result also corroborates Buttner and Rosen (1988) and Adeyemi (2013) who reported that sexual stereotyping and discrimination on ground that women are by nature, less suited for managerial roles pushed women into entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the result agrees with White and Velsor, (1987), Griffin (1995), Madichie (2006) and Familoni (2007) who reported “glass ceiling” (barriers that prevent female mid-managers from moving up to the executive suite) as a factor that influence women into business. The relatively weak positive relationship between gender factors and profitability of women entrepreneurship further corroborates the findings that women enterprises grow more slowly and generates lower profit levels than male enterprises (De Mel, McKenzie & Woodruff, 2008) because they have lower ability to access funds for expansion that could yield higher level profit (Okafor and Amalu, 2010).

Key cultural variables investigated include religion, ethnicity, cultural practices. Each of these items resulted in a positive coefficient of correlation. This result is in line with research works of Thornton and Occasio, (2008) and Thornton, Ribeiro and Urbano (2011) that major domains of life and their effects on entrepreneurship are measured within the context of family, religion, market opportunities, ethnicity and profession. This result further align with findings of Neude & Amainniti, (2012) that there is prejudice against women entrepreneurs in developing countries due to cultural practices, religious bigotry, discrimination and traditional patriarchal cultures.

**CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study show that women in Nigeria are affected by a number of cultural factors that impede the growth and development of their entrepreneurial intentions. The study presented a picture of some gender bias and culture related barriers that women must overcome to be able to establish new businesses or expand existing ones. Furthermore, the findings of the study support researches that cultural beliefs about gender and entrepreneurship play fundamental role in women entrepreneurship.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the followings were recommended.

(i) Programmes for the development of women entrepreneurship should recognize the traditional gendered role of women that contributes to the double burden of responsibilities. Governments are encouraged to ensure that capacity building in entrepreneurship is complemented by access to social programmes to relieve the burden.

(ii) Nigeria government should improve governmental and societal encouragement of women’s participation in economic issues, nation building, innovation and productivity.

(iii) Government should provide financial support to women entrepreneurs through micro-financing.

**REFERENCES**


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