

# INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The study examined the influence of culture on women entrepreneurship in Nigeria, with a specific emphasis in Enugu state. Data for the study was collected from 163 selected female entrepreneurs in Enugu state by means of questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed with a non parametric chi – square statistics. From the analysis of data and literature reviewed, it was discovered and concluded that cultural values have significant influence on the performance of women entrepreneurship in Nigeria and other sub Sahara Africa. Based on the conclusion, the study recommended among others that government at different levels should ensure that human rights are enforced especially as it concerns women.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Women, Entrepreneurship.

## INTRODUCTION

The global involvement of women in entrepreneurship development cannot be overemphasized. Harvey (2009) posits that women's entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival but also have positive social repercussions for the women themselves and their social environment. Gundry and Welsch (009) submit that the involvement of women in entrepreneurship and the growth of their business

has immensely contributed to the global economy; as well as the economies of their immediate communities and countries.

Nwigwe (2018): Highlights four different types of female entrepreneurs as conventional, innovative, domestic and radical. The scholar further distinguish between the four types of women entrepreneurs. They postulate that conventional women entrepreneurs are highly committed to both entrepreneurship ideals and to the conventional gender role for women. The conventional female entrepreneurs accept the fact that they have to work long hours to fulfill both their domestic and entrepreneurial roles. In contrast, innovative entrepreneurs are committed to entrepreneurship ideals but not to the conventional gender roles. On the other hand, the domestic female entrepreneurs do not uphold entrepreneurship ideals but are committed to conventional gender roles. Radical businesswomen have low commitment to both entrepreneurship ideals and to conventional gender roles.

Max Weber in 1976 was the first to emphasize the influence of culture on entrepreneurship (Nwigwe 2018). Weber famously submits that Protestantism encourages a culture that emphasizes individualism, achievement motivation, legitimating of entrepreneurial vocation, rationality, asceticism, and self-reliance. It is based on this premise that Hoftstede (1991) sees culture as a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Sequel to this, Hoftstede (1991) equally sees culture as a collective phenomenon that is shaped by individuals' social environment, not their genes. He conceptualized culture as a set of shared values, beliefs and norms of a group or community. Based on this, Zakaria (2002) posits that these cultural values and norms will either converge or conflict with a society's ability to develop a strong entrepreneur orientation.

Hoftstede (1991) shows that culture affects workplace values across a range of countries. In consonance, Berge (1991) in Nwigwe (2018) submits that any modernization in countries must include cultural transformation. As such,

entrepreneurship develops from the bottom up such that culture gives rise to entrepreneurial potential.

Studies have revealed that entrepreneurial engagement and business ownership among women in Nigeria shows that women of northern tribes involve less in entrepreneurial activities than those of their southern counterparts. According to Ahmed, (2012), the major reason for this is that the northern culture have it that a woman is not supposed to be seen moving freely outside. Generally, women entrepreneurs all over the world face various gender, social and culturally based barriers that can affect their intensity willingness and ability to start and grow a business. Issues such as property, matrimonial and inheritance, families and social roles, and cultural expectations and practices can be significant factors in women's entrepreneurial activities and business development. It is against this backdrop that this study is carried out to determine the influence of culture on the performance of women entrepreneurs. Sequel to this, the study hypothesized that cultural values have significant influence on the performance of women entrepreneurs.

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The different concepts of culture by researchers have all in common a relatively wide view of culture with more or less abstract characteristic. It is based on this that Dhaskhayene and Anneli (2013) conclude that culture is a way of regarding and living a life that is shared by members of a social group and that is inherited from one generation to another. They further state that culture consists of ways to behave and value aspects of life and is derived from the social environment where people grew up. Haiyan and Eileen (2007) submit that culture can be conceptualized in three ways: The elitist view – culture implies superior power, the holistic view-culture implies the whole way of life, the relativist view-culture is localized and may bear different behaviours in different regions or communities from the similar society or environment.

The anthropological view of culture as established by Avison and Myers (1995) is a constructivist view, they are against the view that culture has hard and fast boundaries.

They rather see culture as contestable, temporal and emergent and is increasingly and constantly interpreted and re-interpreted is social relations. They turn down the idea that sees culture as a set of predefined variable that is exclusive for a certain society.

The concept of entrepreneurship is synonymous with business investment and wealth creation. Agbaeze (2007:5) sees entrepreneurship as the process of taking advantage of the need-gap to develop or, create wealth by assembling or investing the necessary resources, and assuming the associated psyche and financial risk, and receiving rewards in such an investment. Supporting this concept, Ndubuisi (2013) posits that entrepreneurship thrives on creating and adding value, investing capital and aggregating input resources, managing the risks of uncertainties, and managing the risks of uncertainties, and getting material and psychological satisfaction. Kilby (1971) in Ndubuisi (2013:21) conceptualize entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise profitably.

## **CONCEPT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR**

Okafor and Mordi (2009) posit that women entrepreneurs are simply women that participate in total entrepreneurial activities, who take risks involved in combining resources together in a unique way so as to take advantage of the opportunity identified in their immediate environment through production of goods and services. Kerka (2008) submits that the spectrum of women in entrepreneurship often ranges from home based business to micro, small and medium enterprises. He however, states that women entrepreneurs generally share the same motivations with their male counterparts. It has been observed that Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate in all sphere of women's live. Nwigwe (2018) states that, as in other male dominated societies, the social relations and activities of Nigerian women and men are governed by patriarchal system of socialization and cultural practices, which favour the interest of men against that of women. The evidence of socio-cultural influence on entrepreneurship is visible, from the point of entrepreneurship among women in Nigeria.

Ogundele (2008) postulated that the role of men and women generally in different environment varies widely. In many societies certainly, women do not enjoy parity with men as participants in the economy. The extent to which women are allowed to participate in economic activities affect their drive to go into entrepreneurship. Researches have shown that values about family role for men and women affect entrepreneurial emergency of women as well as men. Values about family role determine how family unit divide responsibilities for the provision of economic well-being of the family unit. This as we know varies among cultures. In some cultures, the men are seen as the bread winner while the women are restricted to home keeping, where as in other cultures, the bread winner role is borne by both men and women.

It has been observed that in Nigeria, the socio-cultural system is gender discriminatory in terms of economic engagement. In the view of Adeleke (2007), the traditional belief about the position and role of women do not allow women to engage in serious economic activities and as a result places a limit on the entrepreneurial drive of women in Nigeria. It is believed in some quarters that the women's role is in the home and if a woman engages in activities outside the home, she had gone against the culture and will be severely dealt with. Sequel to this, Nwigwe (2018) submits that most Nigerian women suffer a kind of displacement from economic activities as a result of cultural beliefs.

However, scholars like Onyenuga (2008) believe that the situation appears to have improved due to globalization and increased enlightenment and awareness as well as the challenges of economic realities of today face by the family unit. However, research has shown that the level of participation in entrepreneurial activities by Nigerian women in relation to men is still very low but the degree of disparity differs from tribes depending on the level of permissiveness allowed by the culture of each tribe

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the five (5) Dimensional theory of Geert Hofstede. This theory according to Ugwa (2018) which based on factor analysis of data was able to

identify five major dimensions as the key to cultural differences. The five dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity – femininity, individualism/collectivism and long term orientation. Most of these dimensions have been identified as some of the factors that affect women entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

**MASCULINITY/FERMININITY:** The Nigerian culture is identified to be assertive, competitive and tough (Fadahims; 2008). There are three major results to this cultural orientation and they are strong achievement motivation in terms of wealth and recognition and gender based occupational segregation. Hamilton (2007) submit that inter-cultural comparison shows that the degree of masculinity among the Nigerian sub cultures varies substantially, with the south - east culture ranking highest while the Northern culture ranking lowest on the continuum

**STEREOTYPING AND FEMALE ROLE:** Stereotyping in the views of Davidson and Cooper (2003) is the process of categorizing an individual into a particular group and attributing a set of characteristics to the individual on the basis of the group membership. Gender or sex stereotypes according to Konard and Linnehan (1999) are shared beliefs about the psychological trait of women and men.

Simmons (1996) asserts that women are sensitive, soft and care for other people. They need men to protect them; they see the world as frightening place and are not leaders. These stereotypes as submitted by Simmon (1996) demonstrate the fundamental and primary content of women's gender conditioning and its cumulative effect which appears to be that many women have lower self esteem and ability to achieve success than men. The process of conditioning takes place while growing up occurs in a number of very specific ways. The most important of these are that men have to be disconnected from their ability to feel, they are separated from women by sexism, they become sexual objects and men are separated from their children by work.

Gbadamosi (2004) asserts that Nigerian culture generally is highly characterized by conservation as against openness to change. He further submits that culture characterized by openness to change facilitates entrepreneurial emergence, because such culture motivates people to follow their autonomous inner directed interests in

uncertain directions. This results in self direction and stimulates value types. On the other hand, conservative cultures limit the desire and quest for change, want creativity drive. The implications and impact of these cultural features are evident in the differences in entrepreneurial drive and emergence among the various tribes of Nigeria. Apparently, the Hausa/Fulani culture is the most conservative and evidently the least entrepreneurial among the tribal groupings (Gbadamos, 2004).

Research has shown that Nigerian women generally feel threatened by ambiguous situation and always try to avoid such situations. (Nwigwe, 2018). It has equally been observed that Nigerian women exhibit a cushion approach to risk and a high degree of against the face of uncertain future. Nigerian women are very apprehensive about future uncertainty and try very measure of uncertainty avoidance by Nigerians (Benneth, 2009). There is greater willingness of Nigerian women to maintain a status quo. That is, to stay working as a paid worker. This attitude of Nigerian women has negative effect on the growth of women entrepreneurship.

Researchers have shown evidence that women entrepreneur/businesses are generally smaller, grow slowly and are less profitable. Similarly Buttner and Rosen (1988) submit that American loan officers rated women as significantly less like successful entrepreneurs on the dimensions of leadership, autonomy, risk taking, readiness for change, endurance, lack of emotionalism, and low need for support when compared to equivalent men. Equally, researchers have argued that entrepreneurship is an activity that involves a sense of dominance tied to notions of masculinity within modern capitalist cultures.

According to Nwigwe (2018), a number of theorists attempt to identify barriers which female business owners face. These theorists focus on the social structures, which support gender differences. In this regards, Ugwa (2018) examines why women owned businesses are typically less financially successful than business owned by men. They submit that women's lack of industry experience and family situation especially responsibility for children explain part of the difference in income. Yoder (1991) postulates that aspiring female entrepreneurs face additional barriers to success



arising from negative social attitudes. They argue that prejudice against female entrepreneurs is much experienced much more severely in Africa than in developed western nations, arising from deeply rooted, discriminatory cultural values attitudes, practices and the tradition of patriarchal cultures. Gbadamosi (2004) states that local prejudice is expressed through differential attitudes towards women in general, and through different standards and expectations for women's social behavior in particular.

Nwigwe (2018) reported that lack of educational opportunities for girls throughout sub-sahara Africa put women at a tremendous disadvantage in adult life. The scholar stresses that not only are they unable to improve their own intellectual and social abilities through education, they also suffer from social subservience and an inability to engage in business on an equal footing with men. Ugwa (2018) submits that inadequate education leaves women ill-equipped to resist normative pressures from society for them to conform to traditional social role expectations for division of work. Educational deficits also make it difficult for women to counter pressure by their husbands and family members to conform to social norms.

It has been observed that in Muslim communities of sub-sahara Africa like in Nigeria, it is not considered socially right or proper for a woman to work outside the home or to own her own business. It is feared that a married woman's access to an independent source of income will change traditional roles in the family undermine patriarchal domestic relations and affect the balance of power within the household, potentially leading to divorce and the possibility of self determination (Nwigwe, 2018).

Benneth (2009) report that socially constructed meanings may interpret the fact of a married women working for pay outside the home as deriving directly from a man's inability to control his wife or to provide adequately for his family without her assistance. Fearing such a loss of control, personal honour or social standing, many men simply refuse to allow their wives to start or operate their own businesses. An even greater threat is the social stigma that might attach to a man if his wife is seen to



be more successful than he is. Such deep social embarrassment and dishonour of the family name are deemed intolerable outcomes in many cultures of the world not just in Africa.

## ANALYSIS

Data for this study was collected from the primary source through the instrument of questionnaire. The questionnaire item was administered to one hundred and sixty three (163) female entrepreneurs selected in Enugu State, Nigeria. The data for the study is presented in the table below and was analyzed with non parametric chi-square statistics.

Table 1: Cultural value influence the performance of female entrepreneurs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	153	93.86
No	02	1.23
Indifference	08	4.91
Total	163	100

**Source:** Field Survey 2018.

From the table, we observe that one hundred and fifty three (153) of the respondents representing 93.86 percent agreed that cultural value affects the performance of the female entrepreneurs. The table also reveals that only two (02) of the respondents were of the view that culture has no effect on the female entrepreneurs performance while eight (08) of them were indifference.

**Hypothesis:** Cultural values have significance influence on the performance of female entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Table 2: Contingency table

Response	O	E	O – E	(O – E) <sup>2</sup>	(O – E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Yes	153	54.33	98.67	9735.77	179.20

No	02	54.33	-52.33	2738.43	50.40
Indifference	08	54.33	-46.33	2146.47	39.51
Total	163				269.11

$X^2$  calculated = 269.11

Degree of freedom = 2

Level of significance = 0.05

Critical value of 2 degree of freedom = 5.99

**Decision Rule:** Reject the Null hypothesis and accept the alternate if the calculated  $x^2$  value is greater than the  $x^2$  critical value. Thus cultural values had significance influence on the performance of female entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

From the literature reviewed and the finding of our analysis, we conclude that cultural value, practices and socio-economic variables have a lot of negative significance influence on the performance and success of female entrepreneurs in Nigeria and other sub Sahara African countries.

Based on our findings and conclusion, we recommend that government at different levels should ensure that human right as they are enshrined in the constitution are enforced especially as it affects women. We also recommend that Nigerian women especially those that wish to go into entrepreneurship should ensure they are well educated to overcome some cultural influence that does not promote female growth and development. Finally we recommend that charitable organizations, donor agencies and government should dedicate special funds in form of grant for the development of female entrepreneurs.

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