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DEMYSTIFYING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF COMPETENCE ON ASSERTIVENESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to empirically examine the influence of the assertiveness of women entrepreneurs on their social performance and the moderating role of competence. The data for this study was collected from one Hundred and Three (103) respondents from the Nigerian Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI), which was founded in 1978 and registered under the land perpetual succession Act as a non-profit organization. The findings reveal that women's assertiveness is significant, positive predictors of social responsibility. The bulk (47.6%) of the respondents were between 31-40 years old, 40.8% of the respondents had been working for between 6-10 years, while 87.4 percent of the women are married. The regression coefficients reflect the direct effects of both assertiveness and competence on social responsibility within the path model. The methodological framework used in this study provides an enhanced understanding and developing literature on the mediating effect of competence in the relationship between women's assertiveness and social performance. This study concludes that there is a significant relationship between

women's assertiveness (focus, confidence, flexibility) and social performance, which is being mediated by the strategic and relationship competence of women entrepreneurs. This study recommends and suggests that women entrepreneurial competence should be strengthened to improve their social performance. Furthermore, women's assertiveness should be improved through the development of entrepreneurial competencies of women, and this should be addressed through supportive policies.

Key words: Assertiveness, Women, Competencies, Social Performance, Entrepreneurs

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1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has been hard to define as several scholars have described it in several ways, depending on their perspective. Hence, this study will like to adopt the definition of Ojumah, Ogunleye, Udoh, Ameh & Oluwatobi (2017) which states that entrepreneurship is the action of a risk-taker, a creative person who ventures into a new business or revives an existing business as it best describes what entrepreneurship is, based on the researchers' perspective. Many men and women have delved into entrepreneurship in the developing world because of their need to generate and make money (Mathew, 2019). This may be the only survival because opportunities in the formal labor market are limited and where working for oneself or setting up micro and small enterprises, is often the only viable livelihood option (Aliyu, 2020). It is, therefore, no surprise that the set-up of the majority of the SMEs in the developing countries is informal.

It is important to note that women entrepreneurs play a vital role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Estrin and Mickiewicz (2011) explained that the decision of a woman to become an entrepreneur is incredibly prone to contextual factors. Women-owned and women-managed enterprises may face unique challenges than male-owned and male-managed enterprises (Aladejobi, 2020). These challenges can be quickly addressed if the women entrepreneur can fully understand her traits. One of the critical factors that determine the continued existence of an SME is the traits and competences of the owner (Agwu, Taiwo, Agumadu & Afieroho, 2016). Aladejobi (2018) has recognized the place of traits in ensuring effective operation and execution of the entrepreneurial activities demand of women. Entrepreneurs' performance of women, according to Xerr, Xerr, and Xu (2017), are traceable to some traits such as openness to experience, assertiveness, and creativity, sense of responsibility, versatility, risk propensity, optimism, and motivation. Traits and competence are used interchangeably in some studies, but they do not mean the same thing. Competence is the combination and integration of observable and measurable knowledge and skills that contribute to enhanced performance, which ultimately results in entrepreneurial success (Al-Mamun & Fazal, 2018). Entrepreneurial competence is defined as components deeply rooted in a person's background and those acquired from experience (Man & Lau, 2005).

Wissink (2012), in his study, identified social responsibility in the light of the premise of corporate relations to economic, societal, and environmental sustainability. Amaeshi, Adi, Ogbechie, & Amao (2006) described that indigenous firms perceive and practice social responsibility as corporate philanthropy aimed at addressing socio-economic development challenges in Nigeria. Tiba, van-Rijnsoever, and Hekkert (2019) also identified that the

entrepreneurs' commitment to social performance and responsibility could lead to attracting customers and can provide a good business strategy. Yet much of the relevant evidence is elusive, and women's entrepreneurial activities remain primarily invisible or contested (Khan, 2016). The work of Lewis (2006) and Khan (2015) mostly agree that women in small and medium scale businesses, especially family businesses, were characterized by the trait of the woman to be assertive. The study of Peneva & Marvrodiev, (2013) also confirms the assertion that assertiveness is a vital personality characteristic that an entrepreneur should exhibit to be able to handle employees, customers, and even suppliers efficiently.

The main objective of the study is to empirically examine the influence of the assertiveness of women entrepreneurs on social performance and the mediating role of competence. To achieve this primary objective, the following specific objectives guided the study:

- To investigate the influence of the underlying factors of assertiveness on social performance.
- To examine the mediating role of entrepreneurial competence of women entrepreneurs on assertiveness and social performance of SMEs.

The hypotheses are written in a null form as follow:

i] H_0 : Assertiveness of women entrepreneurs does not significantly influence the social performance of SMEs.

ii] H_0 : Entrepreneurial competence does not have a mediating effect on the assertiveness and social performance of SMEs.

2. METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts an exploratory and causal study in which the researcher made use of the survey and descriptive design. The data for this study is collected from the Nigerian Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI), which was founded in 1978 and registered under the land perpetual succession Act as a non-profit organization. Out of One hundred and Thirty (130) copies of questionnaire distributed, only One hundred and three (103) were recovered, which accounted for 79.2% response rate using convenience sampling method. The data collected were validated and analysed using the IBM SPSS version 25 (Aldrich, 2018). A variance-based model, specifically Structural equation Modelling (SEM)-Partial Least Square (PLS) was adopted to show the predictive path coefficients among the variables.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

As nebulous as the definition of entrepreneurship is, yet many scholars have defined it successfully in various ways. However, the objective of this study is to empirically examine the influence of assertiveness of women entrepreneurs on social performance and the moderating role of competence. One Hundred (103) Women entrepreneurs in NASSI were given questionnaires in order to examine the moderating role of competence on their social performance. The analysis presented in Table 1 indicated that the bulk (47.6%) of the respondents were within the ages 31-40 years followed by the respondents who are above 50 years of age. This mean that almost three from every four respondents interviewed were from ages 31-40, while hardly could we respondents from age 21-30 years. The result presented in the Table shows that the significant (87.4%) of the respondents were married, which means that more than three but less than four from every four respondents interviewed were married while negligible few of the respondents were singles. More also, the percentage distribution of the respondents based on their years of working experience show that the massive (40.8%) of the respondents had between 6-10 years of working experience while the least (4.9%) of the

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Women Entrepreneurs in Lagos State

respondents had between 21 – 25 years working experience. Similarly, the distribution, according to their educational level, indicates that the massive (42.7%) of the respondent had B.sc/HND qualification. In contrast, the least of the respondent had a Master's degree, which suggests that they have an excellent educational background required to understand the items used for the survey, and their responses can be relied upon.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age			Education Level		
21 - 30 Years	4	3.9	SSCE	18	17.5
31 - 40 Years	49	47.6	ND/NCE	28	27.2
41 -50 Years	34	33	B.Sc/HND	44	42.7
50 year and above	16	15.5	Master	13	12.6
Total	103	100	Total	103	100
Marital Status			Business Location		
Single	9	8.7	Lagos	98	95.1
Married	90	87.4	Abuja	3	2.9
Others	4	3.9	Enugu	2	1.9
Total	103	100	Total	103	100
Work Experience					
Below 5 Years	10	9.7			
6 - 10 Year	42	40.8			
10 - 15 Years	30	29.1			
15 - 20 Years	10	9.7			
20 -25 Years	5	4.9			
25 Years and Above	6	5.8			
Total	103	100			

The descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of the three variables Assertiveness of Women Entrepreneur Competence and Social Responsibility/Performance is as shown in Table 2. Each of the variable was measured with four (4) items as indicated in the Table. It is imperative to note that four (4) point Likert's scale that ranges from strongly agree (4) agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1).

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Assertiveness and Social Responsibility/Performance

		SA	A	D	SD	
Assertiveness (As)		Fre (%)	Fre (%)	Fre (%)	Fre (%)	Mean
i.	Confident about quality	2(1.9)	10(2.7)	51(49.5)	40(38.8)	3.407
ii.	Stayed focused on tasks	1(1.0)	2(1.9)	54(52.4)	46(44.7)	3.252
iii.	Solve problems immediately	1(1.0)	3(2.9)	66(64.1)	33(32.0)	3.271
iv.	Know exactly what our customers want	1(1.0)	4(3.9)	63(61.2)	35(34.0)	3.281
Social Responsibility/Performance						
v.	Make the best use of available time/resources	1(1.0)	4(3.9)	60(58.3)	38(36.9)	3.310
vi.	Achieve my stated social goal	1(1.0)	12(11.7)	63(61.2)	27(26.2)	3.126
vii.	Yearly allocate some funds for meeting societal expectation	9(8.7)	26(25.2)	57(55.3)	11(10.7)	2.679
viii.	Consistently create awareness about our business social performance engagement	3(2.9)	12(11.7)	68(66.0)	20(19.4)	3.019

Competence						
ix.	Create a work environment that embraces diversity	29(1.9)	16(15.5)	59(57.3)	26(25.2)	3.058
x.	Promote cooperation/commitment within a team	1(1.0)	6(5.8)	64(62.1)	32(31.1)	3.233
xi.	Manage change to reduce customer's concern.	1(1.0)	2(1.9)	68(66.0)	32(31.1)	3.271
xii.	Maintain composure in highly stressful or adverse situations	1(1.0)	5(4.9)	59(57.3)	38(36.9)	3.126

3.1. The Mediating Role of Competence on Assertiveness and Social Responsibility of Women Entrepreneurs in Lagos State

In the model above showing the total, direct and indirect effects of x on y, we can see that the model displays the unstandardized indirect effect (0.0568) of competence on social responsibility which is calculated as the product of the paths ($a*b$) = a (.1933) and b (.2936) from the prior regression coefficient models.

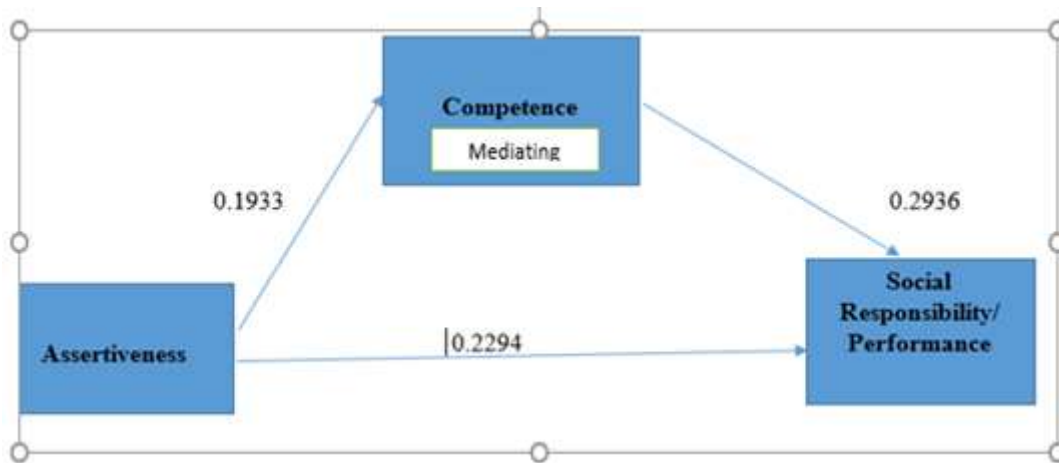


Figure 1

Furthermore, the indirect effect of X on Y is tested using the bootstrap standard errors and confidence intervals. The confidence interval is set at 95% CI.

Hypothesis: To test whether the effect of assertiveness on social performance is being mediated by competence.

H_0 : There is no significant positive competence, interactive effects between assertiveness and social responsibilities.

H_1 : There are significant positive competence interactive effects between assertiveness and social responsibilities.

The acceptance region is if zero falls between the lower and upper bound of the confidence interval, which is set at 95% CI, then we maintain the null hypothesis; otherwise, reject H_0 . In this case, the moderation results show that the hypothesis was not supported $b, 0.2936$, 95% CI [0.0039, 0.1398], $P < 0.05$, indicating that the relationship between assertiveness and social performance is statistically significant hence assertiveness is being mediated by entrepreneurial competence.

4. DISCUSSION

This study looked into the mediating effects of competence of women entrepreneurs on assertiveness and social performance in Nigeria. The result of the analysis shows a significant

positive relationship between assertiveness and women's social performance being mediated by strategic and relationship competence. This outcome of this study is in tandem with the findings of scholars like Xerr, Xerr & Xu (2017), which found that women entrepreneurs' performance of social responsibility as used in this study is traceable to openness to experience, assertiveness, versatility, and sense of responsibility. This study revealed that creating a work environment that embraces diversity helps women entrepreneurs to identify and know exactly what customers want. In the same vein, Managing change to reduce the concern of the customers enables the customer to focus on stated tasks and, at this moment making the best use of the available time and resources to achieve business performance.

To achieve the acceptable level of social responsibility through the process of value creation, focus, confidence, flexibility serving as a proxy of assertiveness is being mediated by strategic and relationship competence. Amaeshi, Adi, Ogbechie, & Amao (2006) have previously discovered that indigenous firms perceive and practice social responsibility as corporate philanthropy aimed at addressing socio-economic development challenges in Nigeria. To advance the social responsibility of the women entrepreneurs in Nigeria, there is the need to enhance their entrepreneurial traits, which can be boosted by strategic and relationship competence, which in turn is affected by various underlying factors, the value creation which will ultimately contribute to economic growth (Moses, Olokundun, Akinbode & Agboola, 2016). This outcome further buttresses the fact that the primary aim of every business is giving value to the customers both as goods, services, or social performance (Aderoba, Babajide & Adesina, 2015), which has a strong relationship with women assertiveness mediated by strategic and relationship competence.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that there is a significant relationship between women's assertiveness (focus, confidence, flexibility) and social performance, mediated by the strategic and relationship competence of women entrepreneurs in Lagos state, Nigeria.

One possible limitation of this study is that it only focused on entrepreneurs from a gender perspective, as it focused mainly on women entrepreneurs in the Lagos area of Nigeria, which makes that sample size to be small. Future studies can consider qualitative approaches to other sectors of entrepreneurial aspects of the economy, focusing on both genders. The practical and Policy aspects pertain to the study identifying women assertiveness as a critical influence on social performance, through entrepreneurial competence. This study recommends and suggests that women entrepreneurial competence should be strengthened to improve their social performance; furthermore, women assertiveness should be improved through the development of entrepreneurial competencies of women should be addressed through supportive policies that encourage women entrepreneurial development to improve their social performance and the impact of their social responsibility.

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