

## Women Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: Policy Framework, Challenges and Remedies

By

Chinonye Moses Love<sup>1</sup>, Ph.D  
[chinonye.moses@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:chinonye.moses@covenantuniversity.edu.ng)

Iyiola, Oluwole Oladele<sup>2</sup>, DBA  
[dele.iyiola@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:dele.iyiola@covenantuniversity.edu.ng)

Akinbode, Mosunmola Oluwafunmilayo<sup>3</sup>, Ph.D  
[mosun.Akinbode@Covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:mosun.Akinbode@Covenantuniversity.edu.ng)

Obigbemi, Imole. Ayo<sup>4</sup> Ph.D  
[Imole.obigbemi@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:Imole.obigbemi@covenantuniversity.edu.ng)  
<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> College of Business and Social Science  
Covenant University, Ota  
Ogun State. Nigeria.

and

Eke, O. Patrick  
Department of Banking and Finance  
Lagos State University, Nigeria  
[ekeopatrick@gmail.com](mailto:ekeopatrick@gmail.com)

### Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper evaluates the policy framework, challenges and remedies of women entrepreneurship in Nigeria. The paper reviewed policies on women empowerment from different administrations and past government in Nigeria.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study obtained primary data through the use of open ended questionnaire as an instrument administered to 570 female entrepreneurs currently engaged in businesses in Lagos, Ogun and Oyo States within South-West, Nigeria. A descriptive statistical analysis was used to calculate the frequency distribution of the responses from our respondents and analyze the data.

**Findings** – The study revealed that although women entrepreneurs are gaining recognition in entrepreneurial activities, they are however, confronted with several challenges which include inadequacy of funds for start-up and expansion, lack of electricity /infrastructural facilities, unconducive business environment, customers dissatisfaction and complaints, high level of competition and lack of trust worthy personnel. The findings also revealed that Nigerian women entrepreneurs are particularly constrained by their weak financial base, lack of adequate business knowledge, inability to prepare business plan, family pressure and other socio- cultural hindrances.

**Research limitations/implications**—Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Multivariate logistic regression analysis could not be used to analyze the data since the data was obtained through open ended questionnaire and interview.

**Practical implications** – The results of the study showed that women entrepreneurs in Nigeria are prepared to encourage themselves to ensure that they are making satisfactory progress irrespective of the challenges they face in their respective businesses.

**Originality/Value** – The study made original empirical contribution to the body of knowledge by obtaining first-hand information on the challenges women entrepreneurs face in Nigeria and the best ways to encourage other women to be serious with their business. Hence, the study among other things recommends that the government should endeavour to recognize the economic role of women entrepreneurs and give them special attention in terms of making resources and facilities available to them for their entrepreneurial activities.

**Keywords: Entrepreneurship Development, Women Entrepreneurs, Policy Framework, Challenges and Remedies**

## Introduction

The enormous tasks, roles and responsibilities being undertaken by women in contemporary families, societies and national affairs cannot be undermined. “Women entrepreneurs around the world are major contributors to the economy, as they are making a difference in the socio-economic arena. They 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 (Iyiola and Azhu, 2014). In many developing countries, due to the increasing economic downturn, resulting in loss of jobs for the men folk, women as mothers and custodians of family stability, assume the responsibility of keeping the family on course through the running of microenterprises. As a result, women have been known to sacrifice their lives for the survival of their families, amidst their reproductive function (Garba, 2011). This means that the neglect of women in any development process constitutes a human waste. To this effect, research seems to suggest that women in developing world are gaining a measure of autonomy as perception of their role in emerging economies seems to be weaning. As Carrington (1994) rightly observed, international organizations and banks have recognized this changing position of women, and their increasing responsibilities through funding women –led small businesses and farming projects. However, the motivation towards women has less to do with politics, but rather with the economic reality that women face especially in developing countries (Carrington, 1994).

In some developing or low income countries, women play important role in poverty reduction of their immediate family especially where the income of the husband/parents is very meager to cater for the family basic needs. They actually play a complementary role in the fight against poverty. Women entrepreneurs in Nigeria are major contributors to economic growth because without any doubt, they are generating employment (Iyiola and Azhu, 2014).

Several studies have revealed that the increasing rate of women participation in entrepreneurship has a positive correlation with increase in the economic pressure resulting in greater awareness of the economic importance of women in a nation (Thomson, 2002; Minniti, and Arenius, 2003; Allen, Minnit and Langouitz, 2006; Tambunan, 2008). In most developing countries such as Nigeria, the vast informal sector business ranging from street vendors to one-person apparel makers, are run by women and the available statistics suggests that this sector account for more than half of the economic activities in these countries (Soetan, 1997; Thomson, 2002; Aina, 2003; Garba, 2011). In an attempt to integrate women into development issues, special attention was given to the study of their economic contributions as well as the problems hindering their entrepreneurship development. Women entrepreneurs are considered as important agents of change for economic transformation and societal renewal (Soetan, 1997; Garba, 2011).

In spite of their enormous contributions to economic development, gap exists in terms of entrepreneurship participation between men and women (Cantzler and Leijon, 2007). Generally, women entrepreneurs suffer lot of setbacks and constraints in exploiting their potentials unlike their men counterparts. A wide range of factors are responsible for limiting the progress of women entrepreneurs and these factors range from socio-economic, cultural, political to family factors. Hence, this study focuses on the policy framework, challenges facing women entrepreneurship in Nigeria and recommended remedies.

### **Conceptual Framework/Literature Review**

#### **Policy Framework for Women Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

Nigeria holds an unenviable record of having one of the world's worst poverty record with over seventy percent (120 million people) of the total population of 162 million being poor,

living in abject poverty and half of this number are women (Adepelumi, 2011). To control this scourge, several Nigerian government and administrations have adopted and implemented various poverty alleviation programs dating back to oil boom era in the 1970's and spanning to the current administration. Majority of these policies were specifically targeted at women empowerment. Past attempts to alleviate poverty among women in Nigeria can be grouped into two distinct time frames of Pre/SAP and Post/SAP (Adepelumi, 2011).

Pre/SAP programmes include Operation feed the Nation (OFN), Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE), Green Revolution, Low Cost Housing, River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), National Agricultural Guarantee Scheme (NAGS), Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), Strategic Grains Reserves Program (SGRP), Rural Electrification Scheme (RES) and Rural Banking Programme (RBP). These programmes were mostly designed with the objectives to assist the Nigerian women in issues such as employment generation, enhancing agricultural outputs, income and reduction of the rural-urban migration tide, which generally contributed to rising poverty levels.

SAP/Post-SAP programmes on the other hand include Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE)-1986, Better Life for Rural Women Program (BLP), People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN), Community Banks Program, Family Support Programme (FSP), Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW).

National Commission for Women (NCW) was established in 1990 to enhance Nigerian women status in entrepreneurship by addressing pertinent challenges deterring their participation in the developmental process of the economy and ensuring that women engage in creative entrepreneurship in cottage and small scale industries. This policy was also established to encourage women participation in cooperative society among themselves both in urban and rural area. Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and ex President Obasanjo's programme on National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001 with a start-up grant of six billion naira. However, paradoxically, despite the large financial and material resources invested in these programmes, the number of poor women in both rural and urban cities has continued to increase.

Following the inauguration of democratic governance, a separate Ministry of Women and Social Development was established in 1999 to promote and coordinate issues surrounding the welfare of women in line with international standard, among other mandates. It was established to assist in policy formulation and implementation (local and international) in the course of women development, in-line with their changing role in contemporary society. The Obasanjo administration's policy framework in support of women empowerment had the following vision: "Mass mobilization of women for national development; strengthening of women societies as vehicle for economic development and political empowerment of women; promotion of greater women involvement and effective participation in politics; and ensuring of greater equity in employment and appointment" (Emmanuel, 2013).

The Women Affairs Department is one of the key operational departments of the Ministry, charged with the responsibility of achieving this vision and generally "to promoting women's socio-economic and political empowerment". The Department has three divisions, which work together to achieve the Ministry's mandate. The divisions are (a) Economic Services and Women Co-operatives Division (ES)(b) Human Resources and Capacity Building Division (HRCB)(c) Women Organizations Division (WOD) and most of their objectives are focused on women empowerment and capacity building programmes. This was implemented in collaboration with Women education sections established in Federal and State ministries, charged with the responsibilities to assist women to gain access to education. This result in the building of several girls' secondary schools across all levels of government.

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) strategy that commits member states towards eradication of poverty and achieving other human development goals by 2015. Promoting gender equality and women empowerment appeared as the third goal in the hierarchy (Todaro and Smith, 2009). The strategies and methods for tackling poverty have a universal application as can be found in the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda. Lately, in line with the support of women empowerment programme, President Goodluck Jonathan's Administration has improved the human capacity of the Nigerian women by the policy of granting 35% of all political appointments to women and making them to occupy very sensitive position of authority.

## Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria

Several studies revealed that Nigerian women are making tremendous success in entrepreneurial activities, but they are being constrained with several challenges (Soetan, 1997; Thomson, 2002; Aina, 2003; Farrington, 2006; Barrett, 2006; Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, 2010; Arenius and Minniti, 2003). These challenges include high rates of business failures, low productivity, no access to capital, credit, and labor among others. It is noted that some of the government policies that emphasized economic enhancement are sometimes gender-blind as women are explicitly excluded in some of the programmes. In line with this, Dionco-Adetayo et al., (2000) investigated and evaluated the implementation of several Nigerian government programmes. Their investigation focused on finding out how far the programs have succeeded in achieving their primal objectives of empowering women to be involved in developmental issues, both economically and socially. It attempted to uncover the possible implementation gap problems and determine the extent of which these gaps have affected the effectiveness of the policy implementation (Dionco-Adetayo et al., 2000).

One of the key factors in determining the success of development in any society is the status and position of women (Olutunla, 2001, Ogundele, and Opeifa, 2003; Ogunleye, 2004). Women are believed to have lower propensity for entrepreneurship compared to men (Koellinger et al., 2008 in Kirkwood, 2009). Studies such as Coleman (2007); Kirkwood (2009) and Garba (2011) opined that women are generally less growth oriented than men. This may be attributable to the inherent constraints women face in their entrepreneurial activities which continued to be a stumbling block for their entrepreneurial growth and success. In Africa, generally, the literacy level for women is low, particularly among the rural dwellers, hence their entrepreneurial activities are not beyond retailing and micro businesses (Aina, 2003).

Another important feature of entrepreneurship worldwide is the risk propensity of the entrepreneurs. Examining women and their perception towards risk, their ability to foresee risks (environmental, business, financial and operational risks) may not be easily comprehended. The level of risks undertaken by women entrepreneurs may probably

determine their level of involvement and success in entrepreneurial activity. Most often, men are seen with taking risk attitude than women entrepreneurs. Garba (2011) observed that if risk taking is a key factor for success in entrepreneurial activities, then men by their nature may be more successful than women who are known to be risk averters due to their patriarchal home and precarious responsibilities.

Institutionally, banks are too elitist in nature, women as 'the poorest of the poor' (Aina, 2003) have no specialized channel to approach banks for credit (Iheduru, 2002; Thomson, 2002). Banks' loans are structured for short term lending operation with strict collateral conditions, which most women cannot meet up with. The banks are mainly interested in short-term LPO financing with high interest and administrative charges. These are social-cultural impediments which prevent women from approaching the banks for loans. Most of the development banks and poverty alleviation support financial institutions failed because they were not tailored to meet the needs of women. Banks prefer to provide large loans as result of the high cost of administration involved in a large number of customers.

In Nigeria, women lacked access to resources because of the deterioration of the economic situation in the 1980's, till today. In their analysis of impressive role of women in contemporary societies, the Abuja Declaration on Participatory Development in the 1990s noted that 'the condition of women has been affected adversely and unfortunately, sustainable development can only be achieved with the full participation of women who constitute more than 50 per cent of the entire population. And yet their role in development has only gained serious attention only in the last few years. The declaration also emphasized that, women lacked access to resources including credit and technology: because of the deterioration of the economic situation in the 1980s, governments has been constrained from allocating the necessary resources to the multiple roles of women and this has affected adversely their access to development (Adepelumi, 2011).

Another constrains that woman entrepreneurs face is in the area of family issues. At home base, most fathers and husbands usually restrain their daughters/wives rather than allowing them to explore opportunities and portray their potentials in the business world in the name of

providing protection for them against being exposed to the cruelty that characterized business world (Ghosh, Gupta and Dhar in Konungo,1998; Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, 2010; Arenius and Minniti, 2003). Consequently, this notion of protection creates dependency syndrome among women and further limit their potentialities require for business success. The after effect of this is overdependence of most women entrepreneurs on their family members, friends, husbands and associations for decision making(Singh, Mordi, Okafor and Simpson, 2010).

High rate of business failure among women entrepreneurs. In reaction to this, Mullins (2011) argued that “in our fifty (50) years’ experience in the entrepreneurial realm, we have read hundreds of business plans- that never made it past the recycling bin”. He further argued that aspiring women entrepreneurs should not “stick to the Plan A of their business plan, but rather, should move to their Plan B”. Many women entrepreneurs never consider lessons to be learned from other business models and how they can adapt their own business to them. Very few of them find it necessary to structure their business in line with the economic models suitable for their ventures. Few also consider and apply the experiences of successful entrepreneurs as part of their economic and business models (Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, 2010; Arenius and Minniti, 2003; Mullins, 2011).

Gender gap in ownership and control of property is also another issue that continued to limit the entrepreneurial disposition of women. Garba (2011) states that in contemporary society, gender gap in ownership and control of property is the most important factor contributing to the challenges of women entrepreneurs. The main reason attributed to women entrepreneurs’ challenges under this heading is due to the fact that women are known to; have less confident, less motivation for entrepreneurship, less preparatory education, less desire to start up business compared with men entrepreneurs (Kirkwood, 2009; Nelson et al 2009).As noted by Kirkwood(2009) and Nelson et al (2009) most family properties are usually reserved for men as family surviving representatives.

Traits such as aggressiveness, goal oriented, proactiveness, competitiveness, innovativeness etc. require for running successful entrepreneurial venture are assumed to be masculine in nature and high demanding. Also “doing gender” which refers to the process of enacting a

social practice in construction of social situation in gender ways (Nelson et al, 2009; Mordi, Simpson, Singh, and Okafor, 2010; Arenius and Minniti, 2003) gives room for clear categorization between men and women entrepreneurs to say that men always prevail over women in places of meeting, negotiation, competition or presentations etc. Men are usually assumed to do better than women both in business and other human endeavors (Nelson et al, 2009). This by implication suggests that women entrepreneurs are naturally disadvantaged which contributes to their inferiority complex and feeling of dependency which consequently affects their entrepreneurial growth and success (Lorber and Farrell, 1991; Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, 2010; Arenius and Minniti, 2003).

The level of self-confidence of women entrepreneurs towards business engagement has been observed as a challenge. There is general consensus that men are more confident and optimistic in terms of exploiting business opportunities than women entrepreneurs (Kirkwood, 2009). Self-confidence gives people courage to exploit riskier business opportunities. The reason for this difference is not very clear on why men prefer to venture into riskier businesses more than women. Probably, because people with low self-confident have low internal locus of control, have fear of uncertainty and failure and are not likely to be involved in risky ventures even if there are chances of getting high returns from such ventures (Okafor and Amalu, 2010). Kirkwood (2009) similarly argued that women do not want to grow their business because of fear of uncertainty and unknown and this invariably, affects their entrepreneurial prospects and activities.

As Aina (2003); Brush et al (2009) and Emmanuel (2013) rightly observed the environment and society in which entrepreneurship takes place is somehow linked with recognition of opportunities. For instance, women entrepreneurs' ability to identify business opportunity largely depends on how the society defines their role. If the society defines their role along with family responsibilities, it means societal value is implicitly attached less importance to women entrepreneurship (Aina, 2003; Brush et al, 2009; Emmanuel, 2013). Women entrepreneurs are constrained in business opportunities identification due to their inability to access the required information fast as against their men counterparts who by virtue of their position and work experience in the society better opportunity in accessing the right

information required for recognizing business opportunities (Emmanuel, 2013). In line with this, Arenius and Minniti, (2003); Brush et al (2009); Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor (2010) argued that opportunity identification is often associated with having enough and better information. There is likelihood that men stay longer in employment, take wide range and tough decisions which has to do with assessing and utilization of information (Brush et al, 2009; Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, 2010).

The Family structure also determines what kind of venture a woman can go into. As Brush et al, (2009); Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, (2010); Garba (2011) noted family of women makes tremendous impact on their entrepreneurial lives. Married women are faced with double influences of their immediate family and that of their husband (Brush et al, (2009; Garba, 2011). Although these influences may vary from one society to another, it is an axiom that in any society, family exerts influence on the decision of women. In some homes, the decision is jointly taken by husband and wife while in other instances, the decision of the husband overrides that of the wife's. Situations like these affect the extent to which women are involved in business and decision making. In summary, Emmanuel (2013) sums the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Nigeria as family issues, lack of supports from governments and donor agencies, personal characteristics peculiar with women physiological nature, lack of access to capital, markets and adequate information. Other challenges identified to be peculiar with Nigerian women are gender discrimination, lack of adequate contacts and weak networking power, lack of access to critical assets such as land and equipment's, cultural and religious barriers (Soetan, 1997; Aina, 2003; Olutunla, 2001; Emmanuel, 2013).

### **Remedies of the Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria**

For Nigeria to improve her women entrepreneurship and economic development, we have the following recommendations made as remedies to the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The banks have to borrow leaf from countries like Indonesia, China and Bangladesh. The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh is a very good example as the most successful micro-credit finance in the world and it is reputed with pioneering the micro-credit movement

all over the world (Aina, 2003; Todaro and Smith, 2009). Information is considered as vital to the success of any entrepreneur. Regular access to important business information can help women entrepreneurs to identify and recognize opportunities. Their ability to process information determines their potential to identify variety of business opportunities. Women should not be restricted (by their family members, parents or husband) on the kind of relationships or network/associations they can be involved in. This will help them to access both local and global market. Though most women start their business at micro and informal level, they require access to global market to sustain and grow such entrepreneurial ventures. Finding global and international market for such women entrepreneurs may be arguably somewhat important. They should not limit their market to local markets such as Ojuore market, Ojuelegba market, Sango Ota market, Oshodi market, Yaba market, Ariri market to mention but few which are presumed to be closer to their homes (in order to blend their domestic chores with their productive entrepreneurial engagement). Effective networking system can help women gain easier access to market information particularly for those women living in the rural areas. This can enhance their capabilities in expanding their entrepreneurial activities.

Acquisition of managerial skills and training are very essential to the success of any enterprise and are considered as one of the building blocks for successful entrepreneurial venture (Brush et al, 2009; Emmanuel, 2013). Since most women entrepreneurs grow their business as micro and small enterprises and treat it as family enterprise (perhaps, this is rooted from their motivational inspiration for starting the venture to just generate income for the sustenance of the family need), they need marketing, financial and managerial skills for effective management of such entrepreneurial operations. Government and donor agencies need to support women in fund raising, marketing and to have access to the required resources. As Brush et al, (2009); Emmanuel (2013) suggested “material and financial supports these bodies can help Nigerian women entrepreneurs handle their challenges which mainly emanate from; personal characteristics peculiar to women physiological nature and other issues such as lack of access to capital, assets, markets and inadequate information.

Finally, Nigerian women entrepreneurs should endeavour to join informal financing scheme usually known as ‘ISUSU’, ‘AJO’, ‘ITU UTU’, ‘daily or weekly credit contribution scheme.

This has become very popular in all the parts of the country. Perhaps as a natural response to a common threat, most communities in Nigeria have designed 'self-made type of primitive financing structures' in form of Cooperatives and informal trade associations whose strategy is to develop a loan-able capital base from the financial contributions of the members. Most of these cooperatives have recorded huge success in poverty alleviation and economic development programmes especially the ones that are been managed and controlled by women. As Adepelumi (2011) rightly observed, while most of these organizations have succeeded over the years with little resources, it is shameful that Nigerian government with access to foreign aids and proceeds from oil and internal generated revenue has failed woefully in alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

A good example of such association in Nigeria is Country Women's Association of Nigeria (COWAN). COWAN was founded in 1982 in Ondo State Nigeria by social worker Chief Bisi Ogunleye who has been instrumental in working on important issues in women's development since its inception. Its activities span 32 states within Nigeria and there are at least 260,000 members belonging to different 35,000 working cooperative societies. In her presentation Chief Bisi Ogunleye addressed COWAN's Women Political Participation and Development Fund (WOPOPADEF), created to increase women's political awareness and representation in government. COWAN was established as an NGO to fit into 'isusu' model that has similarities to the Grameen Bank model. The clients of COWAN are mainly women (both in the rural and urban areas). The primary goal of COWAN is to promote "the wellbeing of women in agricultural, manufacturing, economic decision making for the total development of the capacities of women to contribute to self-reliance and sustainable development (Iheduru, 2002). Its specific objective include to; (i) empower rural women economically, socially, politically and thereby promote sustainable development; (ii) promote popular participation and bottom-up approach in decision making (iii) develop skills, improve knowledge, promote culture and consultation in decisional process; (iv) give poor rural women a sense of belonging and the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the development of Nigeria and (v) give the youth a sound knowledge of the local technology, tradition and culture that are sustainable for economic development.

## Methodology and Data Analysis

Five hundred and seventy (570) women entrepreneurs from South-West Nigeria were randomly selected from the list of registered women entrepreneurs under the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), and other associations of Nigerian Women in business and entrepreneurship which was used as the population of the study. (Singleton, Straits, and Straits, 1993). Some demographical data such as state of origin, age, marital status, nature of their business, business structure and other variables were used to capture the activities of the women entrepreneurs under our study. An open ended questionnaire was used as the research instrument to obtain the required data for this study. The use of open ended questionnaire was necessary so as to enable the respondents to be objective and precise in responding to the research questions. Women in business were classified into agriculture, manufacturing, service and trade. SPSS 12 (SPSS, Inc., 2003) statistical program was used to calculate the survey results of this study. Descriptive statistics which include percentage distribution was calculated based on the respondent's responses for each item on the demographic information of the respondents. This covered their age, religion, business data and their entrepreneurial type of the respondents. Table 1 depicted that out of the 570 questionnaires distributed, 422 or 91.15% of them were retrieved from the respondents and this forms the sample size of this study.

Table 1 revealed that 138(32.7%) of the women entrepreneurs under the study are from Lagos State, 134(31.7%) of them are from Ogun State and 150 (35.6%) of them are from Oyo State. It was shown that majority of the businesses owned by women entrepreneurs are in the distribution as 127(30%) in agricultural, 122(29%) in trade, 118(28%) in service and 55(13%) in manufacturing sector. The structure of business covered by the survey of the study shows that 382(91%) are sole trade business, 27(6%) are partnership business, 3(0.7%) belong to the category of company while 10(2.4%) are under cooperative society. Majority of the women entrepreneurs, 174 (41.23%) interviewed were between the ages of 31-35. This was followed by the age range of 21-26 which is 155 (36.72%). It was observed that few of them are either too young between ages 15 and 20 (4.26%) or too old between the ages of 40 and above 75 (17.78%). The ethnic background of those surveyed was Yoruba 388 (92%), Ibo 22(5%), Hausa 10 (2.0%), and minority 2(0.5%).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Women Entrepreneurs by State, of origin, Sectors, Structure of their businesses, Age, Tribe and Religions n=422,**

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Retrieved data	422	91.1	15-20	18	4.26
Lagos	138	32.7	21-26	155	36.72
Ogun	134	31.7	31-35	174	41.23
Oyo	150	35.6	40-45	51	12.08
Agriculture	127	30	46-above	24	5.71
Manufacturing	55	13	Yoruba	388	92.5
Trade	122	29	Ibo	22	5.0
Service	118	28	Hausa	10	2.0
Sole ownership	382	91	Minority	2	0.5
Partnership	27	6	Islam	157	37.2
Joint Stock Company	3	0.7	Christianity	259	61.3
Others eg. Cooperative Society etc.	10	2.4	Others	6	1.5

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Apart from the descriptive analysis, this study was analyzed using content analysis (Holsti, 1969). Content analysis entailed open coding (line by line examination) and axial coding (identification of emergent patterns) of narrative data as delineated by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The respondents were asked to express their opinions on open-ended questions such as (i) what are the challenges they are facing since they started this business? (ii) How do you think these challenges will be solved? (iii) What are their advices to Nigerian women entrepreneurs?

The findings of the content analysis are shown in Table 2 to 4 below. Table 2 shows the results of the open-ended questions that was addressed to the respondents which focused on the major challenges they face in business. In response to the question- what are the challenges you are facing since they started this business?, Table 2 shows that majority of the women 190 (22.28) responded that financial problem and lack of capital was the major challenge they face in business, this was followed by lack of electricity/infrastructural problem 119 (14.58%), customers dissatisfaction/complaints which 77 (9.43%) and lack of government support 69 (8.49%), untrustworthy personnel 62 (7.60%), unconducive business environment 53 (6.50%), high degree of competition 51 (6.25%) and lack of managerial skills 50 (6.12%).

**Table 2: Respondents' Major Challenges in Business**

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Financial problem and lack of capital	190	22.28
Location and high tenancy rate	40	4.90
Unconducive business environment	53	6.49
Government policy and support	69	8.48
Lack of resources, labour, material and time	31	3.79
Lack of managerial skills and competence	50	6.12
Lack of trust worthy personnel	62	7.59
Lack of electricity /infrastructural problem	119	14.58
Customers dissatisfaction and complaints	77	9.43
High degree of competition	51	6.25
Nature of business/lack of diversification	16	1.96
Lack of training and development/inexperience	25	3.06
Lack of family support	26	3.23
Lack of access to Information technology	8	0.98
Sexual harassment	3	0.86
Total	816	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents as regards the question “how do you think the challenges will be solved?” Out of the total number of 605 responses, financial assistance/provision of loan has the highest point of 137 (22.64%). This was followed by six others items which include; having good government policy/governance 108 (17.86%), provision of electricity/infrastructure 94(15.53), meeting customers' satisfaction 38 (6.28%), motivation of staff 49(8.10%), adoption of new management approach/customer responsibility 33(5.46%) and training and development 32 (5.28%).

**Table 3: Respondents' Opinion on How to Solve Specific Challenges**

Statement	Freq.	Per. (%)
More efforts to develop managerial skills	21	3.47
Involvement in advertisement	20	3.30
Financial assistance/loan	137	22.64
Motivation of staff	49	8.10
Good government policy/ governance	108	17.86
Meeting customer satisfaction/ high product quality/price	38	6.28
New management approach/customer responsibility	33	5.46
Access to information technology	12	1.98
Networking/co-operative society	10	1.66
Training/development	32	5.28
Family support	30	4.96
Supply of electricity/infrastructure	44	7.27
Availability of infrastructure	50	8.26
Self-motivation/determination	21	3.47
Total	605	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Table 4 revealed the result of the advice offered by the respondents to Nigerian women entrepreneurs. Seventy two or 16.33% of the respondents suggested that self-determination is the best way Nigerian women should be encouraged into business, 61 (13.83%) advised the Nigerian women to work harder, 48 (10.88%) of them advised them to be self-motivated, 41 (9.30%) of them advised them to be more focused while 39 (8.84%) and 26 (5.90%) of them advised them to learn to be proactive and start small.

**Table 4: Respondents' Advices to Nigerian Women Entrepreneurs**

Statement	Freq.	Per. (%)
Self-motivation	48	10.88
Self determination	72	16.33
Self esteem	39	8.84
More education	13	2.95
Focused	41	9.30
Hard work /industry	61	13.83
Morality/Integrity	9	2.04
Mentorship	6	1.36
Self-satisfaction	8	1.81
Financial prudence	14	3.17
Networking	15	3.40
Seeking for family support	19	4.31
Confidence/boldness	24	5.44
Training/development	23	5.22
Learn to attract/retain staff	10	2.27
Start small	26	5.90
Customer satisfaction	3	0.68
Risk taking	10	2.27
Total	441	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

## Discussion and Conclusion

The level and extent of women entrepreneurship empowerment varies from one society to another. In some society, women do assume complementary role in managing and providing basic needs of their family, while in some instances their role is only supplementary where they are historically restricted to home chores or family up keep (Brush et al, 2009; Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, 2010; Garba, 2011). The success of women entrepreneurial activity is determined by the type and nature of business environment they found themselves which is subject to a number of factors such as national policies, culture and socio-economic factors (Garba, 2011; Emmanuel, 2013). These factors play significant role in mediating women entrepreneurial challenges in many ways. In Nigeria, many of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are traceable to the inferior status of women, their underestimation as

economic agents, as well as gender bias embedded in tribal and cultural norms (Brush et al, 2009; Mordi, Simpson, Singh and Okafor, 2010; Garba, 2011). Majority of the financial institutions in Nigeria, channel their loan scheme through formal-sector agencies which often elude the women, even for small loans. For instance the Financial System Strategy 2020 blueprint which is the latest policy planning document on how Nigeria wish to attain her developmental and transformational agenda by the year 2020 does not have definitive statement that addresses the credit dilemma of Nigerian women entrepreneurs or how best to empower them financially (Todaro and Smith, 2009).

Participation of women in cottage and small scale industries can be increased by Government introduction of product/process-oriented courses through National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and other capacity building programmes and workshops (Amuchie and Asotibe 2015). Through public-private partnership, entrepreneurship concepts such as the “Innovative Entrepreneurship Program for Women” can be introduced to help identify potential business opportunities, enhance marketing skills, develop innovative product, help improve product quality to prevent business failures, address societal problems such as discrimination (customs, religion and society) against women in entrepreneurship and ensures enabling environment in both rural and urban areas for successful start-up and growth of women entrepreneurs in all SME’s thereby creating a new dimension of Women entrepreneurship (Malyadri, 2014; Saskia, 2013).

Women participation in business decision making can be improved through organizing empowerment programmes and seminars on entrepreneurship so as to enhance their access and control over factors of production such as land, capital, labour, equipment, resources and other entrepreneurial competences (Czinkota, 2009; Todaro and Smith, 2009). It is therefore important for government and other development agencies to come up with policy framework that addresses strategic women entrepreneurship issues in the following areas; making resources and facilities available to women associations and forum in other to encourage entrepreneurship involvement and development for sustainable economic transformation through start-up capital policies, supporting women business growth through technical assistance and educational knowledge which will promote positive societal attitudes, enable conducive women participation in entrepreneurship and foster an enabling environment

(GEM, 2012). This is line with Emmanuel (2013) suggestion that a serious policy focus, support and commitment by the Nigerian government in promoting women entrepreneurship in every ramification, will be the loftiest idea towards achieving this ambition.

This policy framework can best be utilized in promoting women's participation in entrepreneurship when it improves access to market, access and control of economic resources, strengthens and enhances social benefits and protection, reduce risks and vulnerabilities of women entrepreneurs, create a supportive enterprising culture and environment including family support and the society at large (ILO, 2012).

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