
Entrepreneurial Orientation and Women Entrepreneurs' Contribution to Household Livelihood and Sustenance in Rivers State

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance in Rivers State. The study adopted a cross sectional survey design to solicit responses from women entrepreneurs in Rivers state, using simple random. Primary data was collected through designed questionnaires distributed to women entrepreneurs. The target population of Women Entrepreneurs in Rivers State is 329 obtained from the 2014 Directory of the Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs and Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The sample size was obtained using the Kjejcic and Morgan (1970) table for determining minimum returned sample size for a given population. The sample size therefore was 181 and was used for the study. After data cleaning, only data of 153 respondents were finally used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank correlation were used for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Empirical findings revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance in Rivers State. The study thus concludes that there is a significant relationship between EO and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance. The study recommends that government should generate policies that will enhance positive participation of women in entrepreneurial venture such as providing adequate infrastructure and making the business environment conducive for women to participate.

Key words: *Entrepreneurial Orientation, Women Entrepreneurs, contribution to revenue generation*

Introduction

Women entrepreneurship has a great potential to contribute massively to employment generation and economic growth in Nigeria. Women entrepreneurs face different issues depending on the stage of their present life cycle, region, legislation and industry. One thing however stands out, that the entrepreneurship space in Nigeria remains a traditionally male-dominated territory. Nigerian women entrepreneurs operate in an unfavourable business environment, characterized by various challenges ranging from infrastructural deficiency, low access and high cost of finance, weak institutions and many barriers to formal economic participation. Despite the crucial role of women entrepreneurs in the economic development of their families and countries, it is however discovered that women entrepreneurs have low business performance when compared to their male counterparts (Akanji, 2006); women are largely concentrated in the informal, micro, low growth and profit areas where competition is

intense. This abysmal performance could be traceable to limited education, rudimentary skills, low household and business income, lack of savings and social networks, not possessing the required professional relationships, lack of mentorship, inadequacy of relevant experience, Limited access to support services which includes loan levels suited to their business needs, technical and managerial training. These problems arises from limited capacity outreach of existing institutions as well as the inability of women entrepreneurs to pay for such services. The low level of performance is further accentuated by gender- related discriminations occasioned by socio-cultural factors which pose a hindrance to their entrepreneurial activities. Such discrimination is in the area of social wealth, non-acceptance and negative perception of women in business, lack of the ability to gain the confidence of stakeholders (creditors, debtors, and employees) and the inability to balance family with work life.

Entrepreneurship is a global phenomenon and is increasingly regarded as an important activity to business firms. The spread of globalization has created a competitive business environment, which has affected the way entrepreneurs create and sustain their business operations and strategy. Entrepreneurial orientation has therefore been seen as a key driving force for a free market economy. According to Schumpeter (1934), entrepreneurial orientation is the process by which people or organizations discover and exploit new business opportunities which exist within a market, revitalize existing businesses, or introduce new products or processes. In entrepreneurship and management literature, entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is considered the important concept for a firm's strategy making. EO refers to the decision making styles, practices, process and behaviours that leads to 'entry' into new or established markets with new or existing goods or services (Lumpkin and Dess; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003; Walter et al 2006). It is used to explain the mind-set of firms involved in pursuing a new venture and provides a useful framework to investigate entrepreneurial activities and reflects how a firm operates rather than what it does (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996, 2001).

A large stream of research has examined the concept of entrepreneurial orientation on business performance, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) described the process, practice and decision making activity of entrepreneurship as entrepreneurial orientation. Most researches directed at entrepreneurial orientation such as Miller (1983) , Coving and Silver (1989), Lumpkin and Dess (1996),Wiklund(1999), Lee and Chio (2000), Kreiser et al.,(2002), investigated the impact of entrepreneurial orientation with different dimensions on business performance and found that entrepreneurial orientation has positive relationship with business performance. Entrepreneurial orientation is positively correlated to business performance but varies with variation of culture and personality traits (Rauch et al, 2004). Entrepreneurship scholars have attempted to explain performance by investigating the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001). Other studies have found that entrepreneurial orientation enables small firms or new ventures to perform better than their competitors and enhances firm performance (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005).

There is an undersized conceptualization in milieu of women entrepreneurship (Brindley, 2005). Johnson and Powell (1994) emphasized on the significance of differences between male and female entrepreneurial behaviour on the success of businesses because of their entrepreneurial orientation in decision contexts. Gender differences in behaviour might be caused by gender differences in entrepreneurial orientation preferences, but they might also be caused by situational factors such as options provided to females and the advice they receive. Numerous theoretical and practical reasons support the generation of greater

knowledge about the Influences of situational and personal characteristics between females and males on decision-making (Blais and Weber, 2001). Various studies have examined the influence of entrepreneurial orientation on firm performance in developed economies and in large organizations (Awang, et al, 2009; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Kreiser, Marino and Weaver, 2002). Whereas these streams of research focused on entrepreneurial orientation of male do established firms and in various sectors of the economy, those of women-operated small ventures are still lacking. This research therefore seeks to fill the gap by evaluating the individual and composite influence of the entrepreneurial orientation dimensions on women entrepreneurs contribution to household livelihood and sustenance in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The underpinning theory for this study rest on the fact that the factors that would affect business performance of women owned enterprises would be significantly different from male owned enterprises. This argument is anchored on liberal and social feminist theories. Liberal feminist theory is rooted in liberal political philosophy which encompasses basic beliefs in the equality of all beings, and in human beings as essentially rational, self-interest-seeking agents. The liberal feminist theory attributes gender-based differences to the variations in power and opportunity accorded men and women in society, that is, the structural positions women and men occupy in society (Beasley, 1999). Thus, differences in the achievements of men and women are ascribed to the inability of women to realise their full potential because they are denied equal access to opportunities in the labour markets and to resources. This in turn has hindered women from acquiring the skills and capabilities necessary to compete on equal basis with men. According to the liberal feminist theory, once equal access to resources is ensured, gender differences in performance seemingly disappear (Carter et al., 1997).

In contrast to the liberal feminist theory, the social feminist theory propagated by Kalleberg and Leicht, (1991), suggests that, due to differences in early and on-going socialization, women and men do differ inherently. However, it also suggests that this does not mean women are inferior to men, as women and men may develop different but equally effective traits. The social feminist which emanates from the social learning theory and psychoanalysis, holds that differences between men and women exist from their earliest moments in life and result in fundamentally different ways of viewing the world. These differences are seen in the way women and men construct and interpret reality and how these influence the formation of their values and intentions (Carter et al., 1997). Men and women are inherently different because of differences in their socialization, training and experiences encountered prior to entry into particular work positions. Differences in nurturing result in different self-perceptions, motivations and belief structures. As a consequence women adopt different approaches to work which may, or may not be as equally effective as those adopted by men (Fischer et al., 1993).

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial Orientation has emerged as a major construct within the strategic management and entrepreneurship literature over the recent years. It can be viewed as a characteristic of organizations, which can be measured by looking at top management's entrepreneurial style, as evidenced by the firms' strategic decisions and operating management philosophy (Miller, 1983). EO should be distinguished from entrepreneurship. The essence of entrepreneurial orientation depends on how entrepreneurs implement entrepreneurship in the course of realizing their career ambition. On the other hand,

entrepreneurship focuses on new entry. New entry can be accomplished by entering either into new or established markets with new or existing goods or services (Burgelman, 1983). Covin and Slevin (1988) argued that an organization's EO is the summation of the extent to which top managers are inclined to take business related risks, to favour change and innovation in order to obtain a competitive advantage for their firm and to compete aggressively with other firms. They proposed that EO should be considered as the strategic dimension which can be observed from the firms' strategic posture running along a continuum from a fully conservative orientation to a completely entrepreneurial one. They suggest that firms with a propensity to engage in relatively high levels of risk-taking, innovative and proactive behaviours have EO, while those engaging in relatively low levels of these behaviours have conservative orientation (Covin and Slevin, 1991).

Lumpkin and Dess (1996) defined EO as to the processes, practices and decision-making activities that lead to new entry. They considered EO as a process, which is concerned with the methods, practices, and decision-making styles used by the managers. However, the term EO is also used to refer to the set of personal psychological traits, values, attributes and attitudes that are strongly associated with a motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Kreiser et al., 2002; and Poon et al., 2006). According to Morris and Paul (1987), EO is the propensity of a company's top management to take risky actions, be innovative and proactive. EO is an important measure of the way a firm is organized. It has been conceptualized as the process and decision-making activities used by entrepreneur to act entrepreneurially (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001; Rauch et al., 2006; Kreiser and Davis, 2010; and Ullah et al., 2011

EO has often been operationalized in terms of three dimensions identified by Covin and Slevin (1989), building upon the earlier work of Khandwalla (1976) and Miller and Friesen (1982), viz., 'innovativeness', 'risk-taking' and 'proactiveness', to characterize and test entrepreneurship. Later, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) identified two more dimensions, 'autonomy' and 'competitive aggressiveness', to conceptualize EO. However, it has sometimes been argued that 'autonomy' is an internal organizational driver of entrepreneurship, which influences the organizational climate for entrepreneurship (Hadji et al., 2007; and Hough and Scheepers, 2008). Secondly, some researchers claimed that 'Competitive Aggressiveness' forms a part of the proactiveness dimension and does not represent a separate dimension (Hough and Scheepers, 2008; and Chang and Lin, 2011).

Contribution to Household Livelihood and Sustenance

Opoku-Ware (2014) observed that women all over the world contribute substantially to the economic survival of their households. The performance of domestic roles for the survival of their households ensures that women engage in other activities outside the home which include trading, providing support services to traditional caterers, and selling of ice water to generate income in order to reduce the poverty levels of their households. For instance, the income earned from these activities are usually used to purchase buckets, basins and cooking utensils like sauce pans, plates, bowls, and other things necessary for household use. Hence, women perform dual responsibilities, that is, responsibilities in and outside the home. They also bear principal responsibility for maintaining the home and caring for society's dependents' –children and the elderly. However, it is surprising to note that in the developing world, majority of women are engaged in the informal sector of the economy as opposed to the formal sector; they perform low paid jobs, or work in the family enterprise (ILO, 2008). Their contributions to development are often unrecognized, underestimated and/or

unaccounted for in official statistics (World Bank, 2005).

Abonge (2012) in a study conducted in North West Region of Cameroon observed that micro and small scale enterprises has increasingly become the mainstay of poor women entrepreneurs who are compelled to operate these enterprises for household provisioning and as a means of creating employment for themselves. Generally, women's ability to provide for basic household needs is considered a major benefit and attributed first and foremost to the ability to run an enterprise. Access to micro credit accomplished through access to enterprise support program makes available business capital, giving entrepreneurs the opportunity to perform income earning activities and/or stay in business. The study indicated a change in living standards of women entrepreneurs as a result of the running of a micro enterprise. Entrepreneurs reported the use of income earned from their enterprises to meet basic survival needs of food, oil, salt, soap and other basic daily household needs. They also contribute in paying their children's healthcare, fees, books and other school needs. It is evident that through the running of their micro enterprises, women are able to make substantial contributions in sustaining the livelihood of their families. The distribution of roles and the contribution of women in meeting household needs affirm the centrality of women entrepreneurs in achieving and ensuring better living standards for household members.

Thus, operating Micro Small Enterprises has a trickledown effect on the survival and welfare needs of other household members, particularly children. As noted earlier, women are considered to be more altruistic and express a greater propensity to spend more of their income earned on household welfare needs of family members and children (Batliwala and Dhanraj, 2004; Kevane and Wydick, 2001; Mayoux, 1995). The provision of basic household needs is typically a woman's responsibility in most households. Women constantly provide for the family's needs and are able to provide support and supplement the needs of children, either neglected or not met by men. In as much as women engage in a variety of economic activities with the view to supplement family income and reduce household poverty, their relative contribution to the maintenance and eventual reduction in household poverty levels remains doubtful because of the traditional notion of the male breadwinner existing in family structures. Although it is true that men have largely moved outside the home to the labour market for paid employment, it is also important stating that women in recent times also contribute tremendously to the family and household upkeep and sustenance with any economic activity they engage in. In fact, women's income is noted to be largely invested in the family and household needs rather than heavy investments outside the homes such as building of houses although some women build houses but on the minimum (Opoku-Ware, 2014).

From the foregoing, we thus hypothesize:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between EO and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance in Rivers State.

Research Methodology

The cross-sectional survey method was adopted in the generation of data (Baridam, 2001). The author further asserts that the target population is the entire population to which the findings are applicable or can be generalised.). The target population of Women Entrepreneurs in Rivers State is 329 obtained from the 2014 Directory of the Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs and Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The sample size was obtained using the Kjejcic and Morgan (1970) table for determining

minimum returned sample size for a given population. The sample size therefore was 181 and was used for the study. The sampling random technique was used to arrive at the study sample. This was because in this sampling method, each member of the population has a known and equal probability of being chosen. It is a probabilistic sampling procedure. Primary data was collected through designed questionnaires distributed to women entrepreneurs.

The questionnaire was structured into different sections. Section one would be structured to provide demographic information about the respondents, while section two would elicit data on the study variables. The five (5) point Likert scale (ranging from 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neutral, 4: agree and 5: strongly agree), will be used to measure responses from respondents.

Data collected from the field were edited to ensure consistency of responses. Data collected was first sorted and cleaned; it was then categorized and coded thematically and entered into the data editor of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0). Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, tables, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used for the demographic profiles and items related to the characteristics of women entrepreneurs. To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between variables inferential statistical analysis was employed using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. Furthermore, the Partial Correlation analysis was used to test the moderating effect of the contextual variable (Government Policy Framework) on the relationship between EO and performance of women entrepreneurs.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

The scale to use for this study had been previously adjudged reliable. However, we verified the reliability outcomes through confirmatory test of internal consistency on the instrument with our sample using cronbach alpha. This calculate the average of all possible Split-half Reliability Coefficient and the threshold level, 0.7 which is generally accepted by the rule of thumb (Nunnally, 1978) will be considered adequate. The copies of questionnaire used were 181. The variables in the study included: entrepreneurial orientation, performance of women entrepreneurs and government policy framework. Entrepreneurial orientation had 8 items in the questionnaire and an alpha coefficient of 0.721, performance of women entrepreneurs had 7 items in the questionnaire and an alpha coefficient of 0.812, government policy framework had 4 items in the questionnaire and an alpha coefficient of 0.785.

Secondary Data Analysis

The secondary data analysis was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation tool at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the tests cover hypotheses which were bivariate and all stated in the null form. We have relied on the Spearman Rank (*rho*) statistic to undertake the analysis. The 0.05 significance level is adopted as criterion for the probability of either accepting the null hypotheses at ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypotheses at ($p < 0.05$).

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between EO and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance in Rivers State.

Table 4 Correlations for entrepreneurial orientation and performance of women entrepreneurs'

		Entrepreneurial Orientation	Household sustenance
Entrepreneurial Orientation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.736**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	130	130
Household sustenance	Correlation Coefficient	.436**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	130	130

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 17.0 data Output, 2015

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a positive relationship between EO and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance. The ρ value 0.736 indicates a relationship and it is positive at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicating also a strong relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between EO and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance. The findings revealed a significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and women entrepreneurs' to household livelihood and sustenance using the Spearman's rank order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. The findings of this study confirmed that entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect women-owned SMEs contribution to household livelihood and sustenance. This reinforces previous studies that entrepreneurial oriented firms tend to be more willing to take risks, and appear to be more innovative and proactive that leads to increase performance (Ahl, 2006; Zimmerman and Brouthers, 2012). This suggests that the firms and the women owner/managers may benefit from efforts to increase their level of entrepreneurial orientation in order to survive the dynamic, fast-paced and complex business environment which is characterized by shorter life cycles, globalization, and continuous improvements in technology. Entrepreneurial orientation is thus a mechanism for the survival and success of women-owned SMEs.

The finding of this study confirms the views Batliwala and Dhanraj, (2004); Kevane and Wydick, (2001); Mayoux, (1995) that women operating Micro Small Enterprises has a trickledown effect on the survival and welfare needs of other household members, particularly children. As noted earlier, women are considered to be more altruistic and express a greater propensity to spend more of their income earned on household welfare needs of family members and children. The finding also reinforces the views of Opoku-Ware,

(2014) that women's income is noted to be largely invested in the family and household needs rather than heavy investments outside the homes such as building of houses although some women build houses but on the minimum. The finding also agrees with the earlier findings of Abonge (2012) that women entrepreneurs' reported the use of income earned from their enterprises to meet basic survival needs of food, oil, salt, soap and other basic daily household needs. They also contribute in paying their children's healthcare, fees, books and other school needs. It is evident that through the running of their micro enterprises, women are able to make substantial contributions in sustaining the livelihood of their families.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women entrepreneurs' engaging in entrepreneurial activity is considered as one of the ways of becoming self-employed. Becoming self-employed is seen as a means of sustaining oneself and consequently providing an income for others through employment of those with the capacity to add value to the business. From the data generated and analysed, it was empirically discovered that a positive and significant relationship exists between entrepreneurial orientation and women entrepreneurs' contribution to household livelihood and sustenance in Rivers State with women engaging in other activities outside the home which include trading, providing support services to traditional caterers, selling of ice water, transportation etc. to generate income in order to provide for the needs of their households. Based on the discussion and conclusion above, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. It is important to engage women in entrepreneurial education which seems pivotal to developing the right abilities, skills, competencies and orientation necessary for women to make vital contributions through entrepreneurial ventures.
- ii. Concrete assistance is needed from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the form of on-the-job training to familiarize women entrepreneurs with new methods, machines, equipment, business practices, processes and management training.
- iii. Policies and programs should be directed at developing the Personal Entrepreneurial Characteristics (PEC) in women entrepreneurs; since personal entrepreneurial characteristics has been established as having the capability of enhancing their performance in the study.\

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