

Mediating Role of Training on the relationship between Micro-Finance Factors and Women micro Entrepreneurs' business performance in Gombe Nigeria: a Conceptual Framework

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Abstract: *Women micro-entrepreneurs participated actively towards economic development of their families and communities but certain obstacles such as market and gender related discrimination, poor funding, weak management system, low business and managerial skills, low household income mostly in developing countries have hindered their effective performance of that role. It is revealed that micro-entrepreneurship could be an effective strategy for poverty reduction, employment, revenue generation, contribution to GDP and increase living standard, in a country; since women are the worst hit in such situation. Conversely, it is discovered that women micro-entrepreneurs, in developing countries, do not have easy access to microfinance services for their business activity and as such have low business performance than their men counterparts, whereas the rate of their involvement in the informal sector of the economy is higher than males, and microfinance factors could have positive effect on firm performance. The objective of this study is to examine the effect of motivation, network affiliation, on women micro-entrepreneurs' performance in Nigeria. The study involves a survey using structured questionnaire (SQ) and comprehensive interview is conducted to solicit responses from women micro-entrepreneurs. Secondary data was collected from cooperate affairs commission (CAC). Data was analyzed using Hierarchical regression.*

Keywords: *Microfinance, women entrepreneurs' performance, Nigeria.*

I. Introduction

Despite of the crucial role played by women micro-entrepreneurs in developed economy of America and China in revenue generation and creating employment (Global entrepreneurship Monitor 2013). It was discovered that women micro-entrepreneurs have low business performance in developing countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Malaysia, Bangladeshi and Armenia compared to their counterparts in developed countries (Global entrepreneurship monitor, 2012; Ifelunini & Wosowei, 2013) and this is caused by factors which normally affect entrepreneurship activities in developing countries. Such factors include lack of motivation, ineffective network connectivity, startup capital and inability access credit (Ekpe, 2011; Munzanur, Younus, & Akther, 2013; Ocholoh, Okelo, Ojwang, & Ojera, 2013; Opafunso, 2014; Shane, 2003).

Women micro-entrepreneurs, mostly in Sub-Saharan African countries, lack motivational support and the ability to plan and engage in entrepreneurial activities (Teoh & Chong, 2007). While the rate of women participating in entrepreneurship activity in developed countries like the United State, for example women entrepreneurs are highly, encourage, motivated, supportive by their families and government. In similar vein, women entrepreneurs in US are growing at incomparable level with and contributed considerably to the economic development of their country and increase the GDP from 23% to 98% and contributed almost USD 3trillion to the economy and directly employed 23million people (GEM, 2012; Ernst and Young, 2010) in Canada women own 47% of small enterprises and accounted for 70% of new business start-up in 2004. However, 54.1% of total employment and over 50% annual GDP was contributed by entrepreneurs in United Kingdom while entrepreneurs contributed 55% to GDP and 75% of total employment in Indonesia while 56% of total employment and 44% was contributed to GDP in Malaysia. Entrepreneurs contributed 5% of GDP and 35% to total employment in Nigeria (Evbomwan, Ikpi, Okoruwa, & Akinyesege, 2013; SMEDAN, 2012; Norizatun, Mohd, Abdulhalim & Chong, 2011).

Literature supports the fact that women, predominantly in Africa, are deficient in establishing strong and appropriate network ties (connections) with social groups, societies, organizations and other social contact as a channel to gain access to information, on there customers demand and suppliers and micro finance factors (Ateino, 2009; Olomola, 2002). Network affiliation is vital for new ventures and growing firms this will boost up women owned firms performance (Augustine, Bhasi, & Madhu, 2012).

Again, network affiliation has been widely measured and found to have positive impact on the performance of small scale enterprises in developing countries (Brata, 2004; Atieno, 2009; Mkpado & Arene, 2007; Olomola, 2002). Many studies augment the relationship between one or a combination of motivation,

network affiliation credit, savings, and women entrepreneurs' business performance (Akanji, 2006; Cheston & Kuhn, 2002; Kuzilwa, 2005; Lawal, Omonoma, Ajani, & Oni, 2009; Reavley & Lituchy, 2008; Wycklam & Wedley, 2003) but there is limited study that jointly links motivation, network affiliation, to women micro-entrepreneur performance particularly in Africa, Nigeria inclusive.

Furthermore, few studies are available on training mediating the relationship between micro-finance factors, and women entrepreneurs' performance (Vob & Muller, 2009, Cooney, 2011; Okpara, 2011). Women entrepreneurs in this context lack motivation, network affiliation, for entrepreneurial activity and subsequent business performance (Akanji, 2006; Peter, 2001; Olomola, 2002). Where the enterprise Theory (Shane, 2003) postulates that business motive entrepreneurs to engage into entrepreneurial activities they need to identify the economic opportunities and decision to utilize such opportunities effectively and achieve business objectives. However, these could also lead to the demand for financial resources acquisition and realization of micro-finances that abet women entrepreneurs to effectively engage in entrepreneurial activity effectively. Proper use of acquired resources through good business plan and organizational design could lead to entrepreneurship performance (Ekpe, 2011).

Yet again, micro-finance factors could not lead to business performance without identifying the economic opportunity for entrepreneurial activity and utilize such opportunity to achieve defined objectives. Resources Based View (RBV) theorist believes that firms as bundles of resources and capabilities, differing in their endowment. RBV has several classifications of resources. Godfrey and Hill (1995) classified resources as physical, human or organisational routines. Physical are tangible firm resources that are physically visible or property based. While human and organisational routines are intangible resources those are knowledge or process based (Barney, 1991). Motivation, network affiliation and training (skills acquisition) are regarded as intangible business organisational valuable resources that can be used to achieve competitive advantage for entrepreneur's business performance when engaging in new and existing business (Barney, 1991; Shane, 2003). At the same time as intangible resources are identified as motivation and network affiliation (Meyer & Kolbe 2005).

Therefore the theory would predict about the role of RBV in sustaining firm performance. Supporting entrepreneurs in strengthening entrepreneurship activity could help firm achieve its organizational performance. Consequently this will be formalized by saying that the more intangible and tangible resources a firm has, the greater the level of entrepreneurial performance (Barney, 1991; Barney, 1986). Limited studies are also available on moderating effect of training in relation to microfinance factors, and entrepreneur's success (Ekpe, 2011; Cooney, 2011). Contingency theory is related to moderator variable that explains how organization will achieve a competitive advantage (Ajibolade, 2013). To achieve organization and management desired objectives entrepreneurs need to be effectively trained (Gerdin & Greeve, 2004). Also the theory observed that entrepreneur's ability to achieve business performance depends on situation of the firm. In the same vein, entrepreneurs may have an innovation idea, opportunity and great likelihood to achieve firm objectives but may not utilize the opportunity if he/she disposes. RBV (Wernerfelt, 1984) concluded that firm's resources lead to business performance which eventually enable the firm to diversify its operations and achieve its entrepreneur's success. Kim (2014) found that availability of firm's resources (tangible and intangible) and business performance are positively related.

Nigeria's inability to provide sustainable entrepreneurs scheme, gender related discrimination, lack of start up capital and credit access, inability to develop and provide a conducive environment for women entrepreneurs have affected the participation of women in entrepreneurship activities.

Furthermore, such challenges often hinder economic development and increase poverty level in a country; studies worldwide indicated a low down economic development and sky-scraping poverty in developing country like Nigeria is due to that country's incapability to build up her economic sector and encourage women owned enterprises (Iganiga, 2008). Other studies base their arguments on Nigerian failure to raise the spirits of women micro-entrepreneurs in the country (Kuzilwa, 2005; Machirori, & Fatoki, 2013). Micro-finance factors and business performance is vital to micro-entrepreneurs in Nigeria due to the country's poor economic indices portrayed by low down Growth Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate, (GR) high population (HP), high birth rate (HBR) and low death rate (LDR), high poverty (HP) and high unemployment (HU) (Evbuomwan et al., 2013; NBS/SMEDAN, 2012; ILO, 2011). In the light of this, the Nigerian government has encouraged the vulnerable women to form self help groups (SHG), so as to access finance resources that will nurture women owned business. Women micro-entrepreneurs also serve as a tool for improving their quality of life increase living standard create new ways of delivering basic services within the economy. Based on the discussions above, this study examines the relationship between micro-finance factors (motivation and network affiliation) and women entrepreneurs' performance in Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

Evidences from literature show that entrepreneur's motivation aids entrepreneurship performance (Teoh & Chong, 2007; Norizaton, et al., 2011; Ocholah et al, 2013; Jan-queen, Elegwa & Christopher, 2013). The result of such entrepreneurs motivation enable the firm achieves its firm objectives through entrepreneur's effort and determination. The results further believed that inspiration (motivation) factors such as aspiration achievement, necessity, locus of control, and desire for independence propels the zeal to work in the firm, increases output and therefore lead to firm's performance.

Motivation has a positive relationship between women entrepreneurs' and business performance in Israel, Somalia and Malaysia (Dharmaratne, 2012; Teoh & Chong, 2007). Rain (2015) investigating motivational dimensions for entrepreneurship performance. The study found that motivational dimensions entrepreneurs goals motive, achievement, independence, economic necessity are related to firm performance. Hessels, Van Gelderen, & Thurik, (2008) reported that firm growth, is negatively related to the necessity and independence-motivated entrepreneurs, but positively related to the level of entrepreneurs motivated to increase business profit. Gary, Enrique, & Alicia, (2012) report a similar result i.e significant positive relationship between opportunity motivation and firm growth ambitions, and negatively relationship between necessity motivation and growth ambitions. Similarly they link firm growth ambitions to business performance, but also to achievement motivations. Microfinance institutions make available credit/ finance resources needed for women to start off a micro enterprise that will yield desired result and improve their lives. Also in a study carried out by Ali, Sheikh, and Hussein (2013) indicated a moderate relationship between motivation and women entrepreneurs business performance in Brandi region.

Therefore we hypothesize that:

H1: Motivation is positively related to women micro-entrepreneurs' business performance in Nigeria.

Women entrepreneurs, especially in developing countries, lacked social connections which are keys issues in business activities as basis for establishing social structural ties and sourcing market information (Olomola, 2002). Additionally, social network has been found to have impacted positively on the success of women entrepreneurs (Brata, 2004; Ekpe, 2011; Mkpado & Arene, 2007). Atieno (2009) suggested that network affiliation is one of the most valuable organizational resources that gain competitive advantage.

Conversely, MacGregor (2004) reveal an insignificant relationship between firm's network and business performance. Similarly, Khanna and Yafeh (2005) studied the business groups and risk sharing. The study found that no significant relationship between affiliation and business performance. Jones and Jayawarna (2010) investigated 211 small scale firms this study revealed that network affiliation has consequently resulted to success of the firm. Therefore the basic aim of network affiliation is to create long term positive link in order to boost profitability. The entrepreneurs should help promote other business in the context of creating mutual beneficial relationship for future organizational success.

In a study that examined the impact of entrepreneurial network and firm performance of 237 small scale enterprises. However the study reported a significant positive relationship between firms network and business performance (Machirori & Fatoki, 2013). Similarly Premaratne (2001) pointed out that network affiliation is one tool that can be utilized by small scale business to improve their performance. Brink and Berndt (2004) argued that the success of a business relationship is the development and growth of trust and commitment amongst owner managers. Network affiliation had a positive effect on entrepreneurs' performance in UK and USA respectively. While Teoh and Chong (2007) found that network affiliation had a positive impact on enterprise activity in Malaysia. Studies carried out by (Adegbite, Ilori, Irefin, Abereijo, & Aderemi, 2006) also found that network affiliations and persuasion have a negative effect on entrepreneurs' business performance in Nigeria.

The research therefore we hypothesized that:

H2: Network affiliation is positively related to women micro-entrepreneurs' business performance in Nigeria.

Training is one of the fundamental concepts in management research particularly when assessing firm performance. However, an empirical study on the impact of internal resources skill acquisition and management skills and firm performance are limited in contingency theory (Wright, Dunford & Snell, 2001; Azodo, 2014). Training and education is essential to make available the required ability for women to be skilful necessary for running the newly establish firms on business management and corporate responsibilities (Augustine, Bhasi, & Madhu, 2012; Ying 2008). Training had positive impact on women entrepreneurship performance in Mali, Malaysia, and United State of America, South Africa and Australia correspondingly (Ibru, 2009; Cheston & Kuhn, 2002; Kuzilwa, 2005; Reavley & Lituchy, 2008). Several studies have reported the moderation effect of training and small business performance (Thang & Buyens, 2008; Rosli & Mahood, 2013; Thang, Quang, & Buyens, 2010). Thang and Buyens (2008) examined that contingency approach to training and firm

performance. The study found that the relationship between training and performance was moderated by organizational strategy.

Furthermore, these results demonstrated that the impact of training on firm performance may be further enhancing if training is matched with the organizational strategy posture. Rosli and Mahmood (2013) reported that entrepreneur training, innovation and size had significant relationships with the overall firm performance. Similarly Training and credit were found to have positive impact on profit performance of women entrepreneurs (Kuzulwa, 2005). Training (skill acquisition) and new technologies were found to have positive impact on enterprise success (Ibru, 2009). Training and health education were found to have positive effect on the profit performance of women entrepreneurs (Cheston & Kuhn, 2002).

In contrast a study of 1600 enterprises reported that there is no relationship between skills/training and growth or profitability (Foreman-Peck Makepeace & Morgan, 2006). Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that when there is a weak or inconsistent relation between predictor and criterion variables, then a mediator is necessary.

Therefore we hypothesized that:

H3a: Training positively mediates motivation, and women micro-entrepreneurs business performance in Nigeria.

H3b: Training positively mediates network affiliation and women micro-entrepreneurs' business performance in Nigeria.

Underpinning Theory

The study is supported by the Entrepreneurship Theory of Shane (2003) and Resources Base View (RBV). Other elements of the theory include self-employment, business operation and performance. Highlighted four operational measures of performance which are survival, growth, profitability/income, and experiencing initial public offering. Survival refers to furtherance of business activity whereas growth refers to increase in venture's sales and employment. Profit refers to additional returns over expenditure while experiencing initial public offer refers to the sale of stock to the public (Shane, 2003). Furthermore, this study is however similar to the research carried by (Ekpe, 2011) since it has to do with innovation and profits. This is because micro-finance factors could lead to entrepreneurial growth and development in terms of new business or business expansion which could in turn lead to profits (Allen, Elam, Langowitz, & Dean 2008; Brana, 2008; Salman, 2009). In support of Swierczek and Thanhha (2003), Kruger (2004) posited that entrepreneurship starts with action, the creation of a new venture, performance in terms of quantitative growth (turnover, profitability and shareholder's value) or qualitative growth (competitive position, product quality and consumer service) (Ayanda & Laraba, 2011). Additionally RBV is also related to the study because motivation network affiliation and training are intangible resources which lead firm achieving competitive advantage (Colman, 2006; Barney, 1991).

Conceptual Framework

The focal point of this study is to explore the relationship linking motivation and network affiliation; and women entrepreneurs' performance. The conceptual framework for this study is shown below.

MFFs

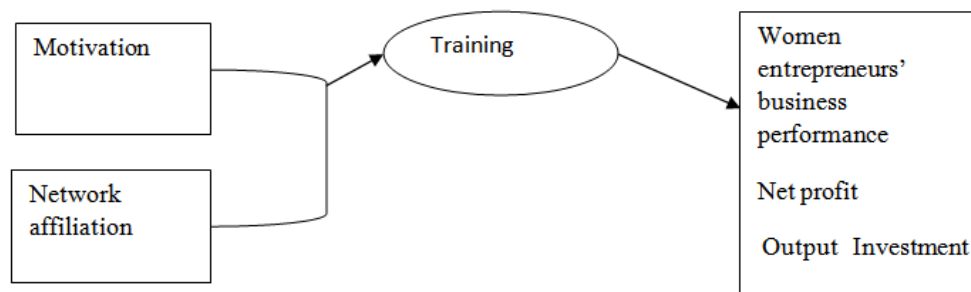


Figure 2.1 *Research (Conceptual) Framework (Source: Authors' compilation).*

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