

**Co mparati ve Anal ysis of Soci o- Cul tural Fac tors Infl uenci ng Rural Femal e
Ent repreneurs hi p Devel opment i n Sout hwest and Sout heast Ngeri a**

BY

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty.

My Ebenezer, strength, inspiration and help

Who broke the snare and made my soul to escape,

The lifter up of my head, who chooses the weak things to confound the mighty,

Thank you for this landmark, it is a gift from you and I appreciate and love you.

I pledge my allegiance to you always.

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Abstract

The study examined the entrepreneurship practice of rural women in Southwestern and Southeastern Nigeria; the role of socio-cultural factors (inheritance structure, belief system, widowhood practice, sex role) on entrepreneurship practices among rural women entrepreneurs in the study areas; the effect of socio-demographic variables on entrepreneurship development in the study areas; and determine the differences and similarities in entrepreneurship practices of rural women in Southwestern and Southeastern Nigeria. This was with a view to comparing the socio-cultural factors influencing rural women entrepreneurs.

Primary data were used. For Southeast, all seven communities in Izzi Local Government Area (LGA) from Ebonyi North Senatorial District in Ebonyi State, being the youngest and least developed State and LGA; for Southwest, thirteen communities clustered around Ipetumodu, Ife North LGA, Ogun State, were purposively selected. The target population sampled included rural women entrepreneurs involved in sale of farm products, fish processing, food processing and trading/artisans. The study used concurrent mixed method approach, that is, both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method employed questionnaire instrument to obtain data from 370 respondents in Southeast and 400 respondents in Southwest. For qualitative data, four Focus Group Discussions were organised in the two zones and eight interesting cases/stories of the women entrepreneurs. In addition, one family member and a neighbour were interviewed to understand how the communities and family members perceive the rural woman entrepreneur. Data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while Atlas.ti was used to analyse the qualitative data.

The results showed entrepreneurship practices of women in both zones started their businesses for survival (88 %) while 12 % was for identified opportunities, with differences in how they operated their businesses: while women in Southeast could be considered serial entrepreneurs, those in Southwest were stable. Bivariate analysis revealed that there was significant relationship between sources of initial capital ($\chi^2=1.180$, $p<0.05$) and entrepreneurship development as well as sources of funding for continuous management of business ($\chi^2=49.476$, $p<0.05$) and entrepreneurship development in the Southeast while it is not significant ($\chi^2=4.943$, $p>0.05$) ($\chi^2=6.759$, $p>0.05$) respectively in Southwest. Considering independent decisions against entrepreneurship development, there was significant relationship in the Southeast ($\chi^2=39.360$, $p<0.05$) while it is not significant in Southwest at ($\chi^2=0.118$, $p>0.05$). For cultural belief, (comprising of inheritance structure, belief system and sex role) against entrepreneurship development, the result also showed significant relationship in the Southeast ($\chi^2=1.107$, $p<0.05$) while it was not significant in Southwest ($\chi^2=0.420$, $p>0.05$). Also, socio-demographic factors observed to have had some bearing on entrepreneurship development of rural women included their education (SE $\chi^2=16.763$, $p<0.05$; SW $\chi^2=1.981$, $p>0.05$); marital status (SE $\chi^2=9.179$, $p<0.05$; SW $\chi^2=3.499$, $p>0.05$) religious affiliation (SE $\chi^2=8.910$, $p<0.05$; SW $\chi^2=2.972$, $p>0.05$) income (SE $\chi^2=1.099$, $p>0.05$; SW $\chi^2=5.711$, $p>0.05$); age (SE $\chi^2=4.734$, $p>0.05$; SW $\chi^2=6.763$, $p>0.05$) and occupation (SE $\chi^2=1.638$, $p>0.05$; SW $\chi^2=10.068$, $p<0.05$). While there exists significant relationship in both regions for perception against entrepreneurship development ($\chi^2=40.440$, $p<0.05$) in Southeast and ($\chi^2=38.260$, $p<0.05$) in Southwest.

The study concludes that entrepreneurship practices of rural women entrepreneurs in Southwest are better organized towards growth and development than their counterparts in Southeast.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Nigeria is a country with diverse ethnic groups distributed into three regions which are: Southwest, predominantly populated by the Yorubas, Southeast, by the Igbos and the Northern region, predominantly populated by the Hausas and other ethnic groupings. These regions have different social and cultural practices affecting both men and women differently. In addition, each region engages in distinct entrepreneurial practices that impact either the micro and macro economy in one way or the other. In terms of development, the regions have both urban and rural setting which contribute to the national economy. A major difference being that most enterprises in the rural setting belong to the informal sector. These enterprises are unorganized, unregulated and unregistered though lawful, and employ women mostly (Akinloye, 2008).

Women have always been involved in entrepreneurship over the centuries across different ethnic groups as documented by Mabogunje and Kates (2004) and Odoemene, (2003). Across different groups, there are some enterprises which are exclusively reserved for women. These are mainly domestically oriented jobs (Akinloye, 2008). Traditionally, women were seen to hold a complementary position to men since patriarchal kinship structures have been the predominant practice in the Nigerian societies (Akinloye, 2008). In another instance however, the woman is believed and perceived to be of weaker sex and must be submissive to man (New Internationalist, 1987). The patriarchal structure has affected the issue of leadership in women within their community spreading to other aspects of the woman's life, such as in decision making process in their business world is subjected to the decision of a man.

In Yoruba society, the practice has always been that the primary responsibility of a woman is to care and nurture her family which includes the provision of material resources. Women believe that providing such resources makes them fulfilled as responsible women and citizens of their communities. Consequently, the society considers the work of a woman as complementary to that of men, and even then, some women have achieved impressive status in their economic and social realms. However, the Yoruba society offers great opportunities for women to participate in other economic activities such as manufacturing and trade apart from agriculture. This makes the women to be very enterprising.

There were guilds formed for various occupations in which most Yoruba women had been involved (Adesina, 1998). Such guilds known as *Egbe* have always been engaged in proper coordination of women's economic activities. The two notable women's guilds in pre-colonial Yorubaland were *Egbe Alajapa*, which traded in inanimate objects, especially food items, fruits and medicinal herbs, and *Egbe Alarobo*, which traded in animate objects like fowls, sheep, goats, etc. Apart from these, there are other specialized guilds of women traders usually named after their profession. Such include *Egbe Alata* (guild of pepper traders), *Egbe Alaso* (guild of cloth traders), *Egbe Hipo* (guild of oil traders), and several others. Occupational guilds like *Egbe Alagbede* (guild of blacksmiths), *Egbe Onisona* (guild of carvers) etc., were dominated by men while both men and women belonged to the *Egbe Agbe* (guild of farmers). Another arm of the farmers' guild was the *Onidarukeye*, which comprised of only women and was responsible for collecting food crops from other farmers and distributing such to both local and long-distance traders. Each guild was headed by a chairperson (*Oori*), the deputies (*Oun* and *Osi*), and other officials. Every guild had affiliation with similar guilds in other estates or kingdoms. Yoruba women have also been prominent in cloth weaving known as *aso-oke*.

Members of each guild also organized the *Esusu* a periodic or fixed monetary contribution by which they could increase their capital and facilitate their trade. For example, through the *Esusu* system members of the farmers' guild, like other guilds in Yorubaland, helped themselves with loans which greatly enhanced their economic status in the traditional society (Adesina, 1998). The members also assisted one another especially during periods of drought or bad harvest. From all indications, agriculture was central to all women's occupational guilds in pre-colonial Yorubaland. In fact, all the guilds depended on the farmers' products for their survival, and thus the guilds were all directly or indirectly connected to agriculture. Furthermore, Yoruba women in the pre-colonial period took active part in agriculture as many of them owned farms, grew varieties of crops, and even belonged to the farmers' guild in their respective settlements. However, it should be noted that the Yoruba women, unlike the women among the Akan of Ghana or the Ijaw and Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, were less involved in the rigorous aspects of farming. Yoruba women only took part at times in planting and in most cases in the last stages of farm work especially harvesting and processing for final consumption and storage (Fadipe, 1970).

Similarly, over the centuries, the Igbo women showed dynamism in their technology and their quest to improve their lot and environment. Contrary to wrongful notions created by European observers at the turn of 20th century, the Igbo were not stagnant. Early enough, they acquired the knowledge of iron working and this helped them to overcome the ecological difficulties of the forest environment (Aimba and Mgbada, 2003). The women were not left out, for instance, pottery was an important occupation undertaken by women in Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Oki gwe, Imo State and in Ishiagu, Nukwa, and Ewuru, Delta State, among other Igbo communities. The potters produced a wide variety of the earthen wares such as cooking pots, bowls, mugs, water jugs and

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