

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

The issues of women low participation, not involvement in entrepreneurial leadership and decision making have been attracting a lot of attention from scholars. This study surveyed the contributions and challenges of women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State. Two purposes of study and two research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. The population of this study comprised all the career women in Anambra State. A sample of 220 respondents, which cuts across the 10 Ministries, Non- Governmental Organisation (NGO), para-statal in the area of study, was selected using convenience sampling technique. The researchers developed instrument titled "Contributions and Challenges of Career Women in Entrepreneurial Leadership Questionnaire" (CCCWELQ) comprising 14 items. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentage. The study revealed that there were contributions career women made in entrepreneurial leadership. Gender stereotype, political transition, religious philosophies, lack of self-confidence and non-extension of equal rights to all citizens to raise capital and so on were revealed as challenges career women faced in entrepreneurial leaderships in Anambra State. Finally, implications for counselling and recommendations were made. Also, it was recommended among others that career women in leadership positions should create forums where they will teach young female adults aspiring to be in any entrepreneurial leadership to develop self-confident and provide free training programmes through seminars, workshops for women in enterprises to enhance their basic management skills.

Keywords: Contributions, Challenges, Women, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Leadership.

Introduction

Women are a major stakeholder in the development project of any society. They are still missing out at the top of the entrepreneurial leadership positions when compared to men globally. This is because they are still perceived as persons who are primary focused on

private, they care of others and in great measure their career path and progress depend on influence of different relations and the roles they have in those relations. Women constitute half of Nigeria's population but many females still find it difficult in ascending to the highest leadership ranking. Woman according to Fajonyomi, Ogungbade, Kolawole, Isarinade, and Bolu-Steve (2017) is the bedrock of every home that impacts the right cultures and values into children. Tersoo (2013) made it clear that women are the heart of development and economic growth as they manage most of the non- monetary economy like child bearing, domestic chores, nursing, rearing animals and monetary economy like trading, labour, employment and so on.

The word "entrepreneurship" according to Bolaji in Mburza and Ngohi (2015), involves using one's ability, resources, knowledge, initiatives and sense of creativity to come up with something worth - while to do that one can hang on for a living. Bill Aulet (2017) observed that entrepreneurship is a craft. It is about developing specialized skills to produce goods or perform services, which vary from small works of pottery, painting, electricians, and mechanics to highly specialized skills of information technology (IT) experts. Entrepreneurship operationally is the innovative process of an established and constantly increasing wealth and estimations of risks and gains.

Leadership is generally seen as a social means of affecting and influencing people in which a 'leader' tries to impact the activities of people and groups around them. Leadership according to Esmer and Dayi (2018) is the process of influencing group members and guiding them to the right direction. This implies that a leader influence member of the group by using his/her leadership traits in order to achieve the organizational objectives. This is why Morley (2013) made it clear that leadership involves the process of providing leading guide to the subordinates or colleagues which could include coordination, controlling and direction given to the colleagues or followers. A leader must be characterized by the creation of new ideas, inventions and entrepreneurial. Management specialists have ascertained about various sub-domains of leadership by integrating it with several domains of management like strategy and leadership, teams and leadership, entrepreneurial leaders, and women entrepreneurial leaders (Samo, Qureshi, & Buriro, 2019).

Entrepreneurial leadership is a notion that showed up by combining the leadership potential with an entrepreneurial spirit. According to Esmer and Diya (2017) an entrepreneurial leadership can be used for a leader who has the characteristics such as taking risks, evaluating the opportunities, being innovative, productive, interchanging and strategic. The authors further stressed that entrepreneurial leaders know themselves and their environment very well and find new opportunities creating value for businesses, stakeholders and society. This is to say that the main motivation of leaders is their desire to create social, environmental and economic opportunities. In support of this, it has been claimed that entrepreneurial leadership manages concepts and thoughts, and these are frequently identified with issues that are not of an organizational nature (Pauceanu, Rabie, Moustafa, & Jiroveanu, 2021).

Entrepreneurial leadership has been recognized as a strong stimulant of opportunity recognition (Renko, Taraishy, Crasurd and Brannback, 2015), firm growth (Freeman, 2014) and innovation performance (Fontana and Musa, 2017). This implies that without entrepreneurial leadership, basic skills required for productivity will vanish with time due to

their (skills) non-transferability from the older generation to younger generation; much worse is that, new skills that originate from individual ingenuity, creativity and innovation and which usher-in new developments will remain impeded (Mawoli, 2019).

Woman entrepreneur is a woman who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent (Chandrika, Vijaya & Lokeshwari, 2013). She has a strong desire to do something positive as an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial woman, who is capable of contributing values to both family and social life (Kumar et al, 2013). Operationally, she is a woman who carries entrepreneurial skills. Women entrepreneurs continue to make increasing contributions to economic growth and are engines for growth, prosperity, and welfare of developing economies (Kinjal, 2015). Although they are engaged in numerous productive undertakings, the returns to their efforts are quite minimal. Majority of them especially those with minimal or not educated are unable to meet their needs and fulfil other family responsibilities.

There are characteristics roles of career women entrepreneurial leadership namely: Imaginative; Attribute to work hard; Persistence; Ability and desire to take risk; and profit earning capacity. Others see its various characteristics like autocratic, authoritarian, dictatorship, democratic, transaction or task-oriented, and employee or people-oriented (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Based on researchers' experiences, a woman who has entrepreneurial leadership capacity is always original, full of imagination, originate ideas with competitive market. She has further ability to work hard, use her imaginative ideas to come to a fair play, can build a fair play, can build up an enterprise because she works hard. An entrepreneur always takes risk because there is ability to proficiency in planning, making forecast estimates and calculation out of the invested capital and will always make maximum return.

Generation of women from very different places, showed very encouraging signs of entrepreneurial pursuits. It is a multi-faceted economic pressure not just confined to any one gender. Women have turned up and realized that the survival of their families and their own potential lies only in working side by side with men. In support of this, Pranathi and Remya (2021) maintain that the ability of women to constantly learn, coordinate, collaborate, deliver, influence, knowledge and respect give a better understanding of women in leadership roles. For instance, several women have taking up enterprising possession and are exploiting entrepreneurial leadership opportunities as a means of generating an income and avoiding the harsh reality and discriminatory practices inherent in the cooperate world. Anambrian women have proven to be competent in all ramifications. The performances of such women are as stated: Ndi Okereke Onyiuke, former Managing Director of the Nigerian Stock Exchange. Dr. Obiageli Ezekweseli, former Senior Special Assistant to former President Obasanjo on Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (otherwise known as Due Process Unit); Dame Virgy Etiaba (first and only female Governor of Anambra Stat); and Hon. Prof. Lilian Ologbu (member federal house of representative); Prof. Dora Akunyili of blessed memory (Director General of NAFDAC) to mention but a few.

The contributions of these women surely lifted the pedigree and profile of Nigeria's women as hard working, disciplined, creative, enterprising, productive and good leaders. Despite all these contributions and achievements made by these women, they are still underrepresented

in leadership positions and still considered an anomaly compared to men in some sectors such as higher education institutions where women representation is higher. It was observed by researchers that over few decades ago, there has been high female–child enrolment into higher institutions in some parts of Nigeria. For instance, in Anambra State where most male children have gone to the lines of enterprises and transportation businesses at tender age; females have taken over the spaces left by males. In support of this, Okafor and Akokuwebe (2015) said that most boys' secondary schools have been changed into girls' secondary schools or community secondary schools to accommodate high enrolment of girls into the schools. Okafor and Akokuwebe added that there has been greater enrolment of the girl-child in both private and public universities in Nigeria. However, fair participation of women in all the branches of work life and inclusive equal opportunities for women appears a prime concern for policy makers, governments, and other actors of civil society (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Nigeria's development record and its demographic composition suggest a need for active involvement of women in key decision-making bodies. There is a clear indication that, even though women form the majority votes in Nigeria's last general elections, they are still under-represented in entrepreneurial leadership positions. Although women are engaged in numerous productive undertakings, the returns to their efforts are quite minimal. Furthermore, the researchers observed that women contributions are less compare to men as they have family responsibilities like the nurturing of children and taking care of elderly people and so on. With the population of women exceeding half of national world's population, one would have thought that they would normally dominate the political scene, especially in democratic system of government. But most women are kept in perpetual abject poverty because they render either unremunerated or poorly remunerated services (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015). Majority of them especially those with minimal or not educated are unable to meet their needs and fulfil other family responsibilities.

A woman with an excellent capability and adequate work experience must be performing in her selected job at a comparable degree to her fellow colleagues. Women should occupy leadership positions in order to fulfil roles given to them. With special kind of reservations provided to women by various governments, NGOs around the world, for the cause of women empowerment, today there is few of women in leadership positions and are in a position to compete with men. In most instances, these women have performed creditably well thereby leaving no doubt about the ability and capability of women to perform when saddled with responsibilities at all levels.

Women in entrepreneurial leadership contribute well for the performance of the organization like, agents of economic transformation, contributions to community resources, sharing the family economic burden, job creation, conflict resolution and development and so on. This is why Zubair (2014) maintained that entrepreneurs have the potential to be agents of economic transformation through their impact on employment, wealth generation, and stimulation of indigenous entrepreneurship.

There are numerous challenges women faced in their entrepreneurial leadership pursuit. It was observed that most career women entrepreneurs in Anambra State have the strong powers needed to speed up the growth and development of the nation, but their abilities are being hindered due to numerous challenges. With several religious, traditional and family

teachings, women have been taught to be submissive to their husbands and even those who are not yet married try to play being submissive so as not to be perceived as being rebellious, which consequence could be remaining unmarried (Sharma, 2013). In support of this, people believed and seen that entrepreneurial leadership venture is one area touted to be more masculine, because males are accorded the status of bread winners. Some scholars have identified family challenges facing women leaders in Africa as including motherhood responsibilities, cultural family practices, and career immobility due to family obligations (Choge, 2015). Lack of confidence due to socio-cultural barriers is amongst the challenges faced by career women entrepreneurs (Sunanda & Naik, 2016).

More so, the commitment demanded by successful entrepreneurship leadership, is seen as what only the men can offer. Therefore, women are discouraged from such ventures, in order to be good home makers (Singh, 2012). They are considered as weak and incompetent. Such gender stereotypes chase them throughout their lives (Dy, Marlow, & Martin, 2017). This is why Khanam and Ishrat (2024), maintained that women leaders often face biases and stereotypes that undermine their authority and competence, such as being seen as too emotional or less decisive compared to their male counterparts. Sexual harassment has formed a stereotype in Nigeria and has misrepresented even the successful woman entrepreneurs who never acquiesced to such advances. It has also killed several entrepreneurial dreams and spirit of a good number of women. Klyver, Nielsen and Evald, (2013) in their opinion stated that assistance, often coming from male, either as financiers of the business ideas or as major customers, is sometimes promised on the bases of return for sexual favours by female recipients.

All these challenges not only hamper the growth of career women entrepreneurs, but also limit their leadership growth potential. Women emergence into public leadership position in Anambra State is just as tough as in Nigeria. Women should be given the opportunity to participate in entrepreneurial leadership so that they will recognize these problems and address them to accommodate full participation of women in leadership at all levels of the arms of government. Also, entrepreneurial leadership will enable them to explore their full potential in order to be able to play leadership roles, and thereby contribute their bits to their countries' socio-economic development and nation building.

Researchers have emphasized the impact that women made in organizations, nation and the public (Deaconu & Rașcă 2015). Despite these extensive contributions to nation development, career women have been marginalized and underrepresented in most spheres of leadership (Gallant, 2014). It is important to note that not much study was done on contributions and challenges of women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State. Therefore, the researchers investigated the contributions and challenges of women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

In Anambra State, few women have contributed much in entrepreneurial leadership positions. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Yet their participation in formal entrepreneurial leadership structures and processes,

where decisions regarding the use of societal resources generated by both men and women are made, remains insignificant.

The researchers observed that the absence or under-representation of career women in the very process of decision making and implementation undermines the fundamental concept of an entrepreneurial leadership which assumes that participation and representation in all areas and levels of public life will be equally to women and men. This definitely affect the women because of numerous challenges faced them such as finance, discouragement from family, gender stereotypes, sexual harassment, violence, and intimidation and so on. This has become a worrisome situation to several women especially the career women groups, counsellors; researchers; women-oriented NGOs; educationists and so on. It is against this background that the researchers consequently investigated the contributions and challenges of career women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose was to examine the contributions ant challenges of women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State. Specifically, these purposes of the study sought to:

1. Identify the contributions of career women entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State.
2. Investigate the challenges faced by the women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State.

Research Questions

1. What are the contributions of career women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State?
2. What are the challenges faced by the women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State?

Research Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to find out the contributions and challenges of women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey is the design which aims at collecting data, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics features or facts about a given population. The design was deemed suitable for this study because it tends to collect and describes data in a systematic way, the facts about a given population and characteristic features. The target population of this study comprised all the career women in Anambra State. Career women in this study are the educated working women. The convenient sampling method was adopted, as only career women that were readily accessible were selected. Anekwe (2016) maintained that convenient sampling method is selecting individuals that are readily available at the point of study. The method became vital as a result of the attitude of the respondents to accept the questionnaires. The sample for the study was 220 respondents. Two hundred and thirty (230) questionnaires were administered, and 220 workable questionnaires were used, as incorrectly filled questionnaires were thrown away.

An instrument titled: Contributions and Challenges of Career Women in Entrepreneurial Leadership Questionnaire (CCCWELQ) was developed by researchers. It has three sections: Section A contains demographic variables of respondents, while section B elicited information on the contributions by the respondents while Section C was on challenges faced by the respondents with a four-point rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with 4,3, 2, and 1 as the score value of the scale. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. Two experts were from Guidance and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument was trial tested using 30 career workers in Enugu State. Enugu state was chosen because people in the area have similar work culture. The purpose was to avoid contamination and for the efficacy of the instrument. Data from test-re-test was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of 0.79 was found which was considered suitable for the study. To administer the instrument, researchers visited the 10 ministry offices in the state. They assured the officials of confidentiality of their responses and the researchers personally administered the instrument to them. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentage.

Results

Research question one: What are the contributions of career women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State?

Table 1: Contributions of Career Women in Entrepreneurial Leadership in Anambra State

Items	Frequency		%
Rank			
Contributions to economic growth	76	32.6	1 st
Agents of economic transformation	54	25.1	2 nd
Sharing the family economic burden	41	18.1	3 rd
Contributions to peace building	30	14	4 th
Contributions to job creation	12	7	5 th
Contributions to community resources	7	3.2	6 th
Total	220	100%	

Table 1 showed the contributions of women in entrepreneurial leadership as indicated that contributions to economic growth for 76 (32.6%), agents for economic transformation 54(25.1%), sharing the family economic burden 41(18.1%), contributions to job creation for 12(7 %), contributions to economic growth for 12(7%), and contributions to community resources for 7 (3.2%). The result confirmed that contributions to community economic growth, agents of economic transformation, sharing the family economic burden and contributions to peace building are the top most contributions of career women while contributions to job creation and community resources ranked the least contributions of career women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State.

Research question two: What are the challenges of women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State?

Table 1: Challenges of Career Women faced in Entrepreneurial Leadership in Anambra State

Challenges			
Items	Frequency	%	Rank
Gender stereotype	70	37	1 st
Political transition	50	22.5	2 nd
Religious philosophies	35	15.3	3 rd
Lack of self-confidence to raise capital	20	9.1	4 th
Non-extension of equal rights to all citizens	15	6	5 th
Inability to access the entrepreneurial roles	12	4.3	6 th
Inability to access the labour market	11	3.2	7 th
Internal insecurity	7	2.6	8 th
Total	220	100%	

As shown in Table 2, gender stereotype, political transition, religious philosophies, lack of self-confidence and non-extension of equal rights to all citizens to raise capital ranked five (5) top most challenges of career women in entrepreneurial leaderships in Anambra State whereas, inability to access the entrepreneurial roles, inability to access the labour market and internal insecurity ranked the least challenges of career women faced in entrepreneurial leadership in the study area.

Discussion

From the analysis of the data generated in this study, it was revealed that the contributions of career women in entrepreneurial leadership in Anambra State are many. The major contributions as revealed by the study were those of community economic growth, agents of economic transformation, sharing the family economic burden and contributions to peace building. Others include contributions to job creation and community resources. The finding of this study agrees the findings of Zubair (2014) which stated that entrepreneurs have the potential to be agents of economic transformation through their impact on employment, wealth generation, and stimulation of indigenous entrepreneurship. Ahmad and Arif (2015) revealed that women entrepreneurs are perceived to start businesses at a faster rate than men entrepreneurs, making significant contributions to job creation and economic growth.

Result from Table 2 indicated that gender stereotype, political transition, religious philosophies, lack of self-confidence, non-extension of equal rights to all citizens, inability to access the entrepreneurial roles, inability to access the labour market and internal insecurity are the challenges of career women faced in entrepreneurial leadership. This is in contrast with Lincoln (2012) that women entrepreneurs in Nigeria do not lack self-confidence in their leadership capability or the requisite competence to function effectively as leaders. Some of the findings are in agreement with Brush, Greene, Balachandra, and Davis (2018) who confirmed that gender stereotype and parity to gap fall very serious constraints in women's entrepreneurial journey. This collaborates with the result of Dy, Marlow and Martin (2017) that such gender stereotypes chase them throughout their lives. The male subordinates have doubts in the leadership abilities, skills, expertise, and competence of female leaders. Dean

and Ford, (2017) for instance that they worry about their (women entrepreneurial leaders) decisions and believe that they are not fit for leadership roles, and can ruin the performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that career women in entrepreneurial leadership contribute greatly in the areas of community economic growth, agents of economic transformation, sharing the family economic burden, contributions to peace building, job creation and community resources. With these positive contributions, communities and society at large can sense vividly the capability and power of women as entrepreneurs and leaders. Yet such positive contributions, career women in entrepreneurial leadership still have difficulty challenges they faced such as gender stereotype, political transition, religious philosophies, lack of self-confidence, non-extension of equal rights to all citizens, inability to access the entrepreneurial roles, inability to access the labour market and internal insecurity. Entrepreneurial leadership is supposed to assent or allow equal opportunities, rights and privileges to all capable citizens, regardless of gender, religion, and so on. Therefore, policy options of increasing women entrepreneurs' investment funds, cost reduction, provision of psychological, moral and financial support from members of the family, and allowing women to be self-reliant, and avoid political transition should come in to bridge the gap of career women in entrepreneurial leadership.

Implications for Counselling

Based on the findings of the study, there is need for effective counselling for the governments, family members, and general public. There is need for counselling in community meetings to sensitize and create awareness to the public on various contributions of career women in entrepreneurial leadership. Such information could be provided to women in various communities, churches, women forum to enlighten them on various roles and need for them to participate in leadership. Counselling should equally be given to teachers at all levels. This is because teachers are their immediate mentors and models. Therefore, female academics on entrepreneurial courses and subjects would serve as motivations for women especially young female adults to learn and cultivate their entrepreneurial potentials for wealth creation. Counselling should be given to counsellors to organise orientation programme for career women entrepreneurs using cognitive restructuring technique to reframe their thinking patterns and cultural and religious doctrine.

Recommendations

1. Women in leadership positions should create forums where they will teach young female adults aspiring to be in any entrepreneurial leadership to develop self-confident and provide free training programmes through seminars, workshops for women in enterprises to enhance their leadership skills.
2. Counsellors in collaboration with female lawyers can sensitize the public on the benefits of breaking negative cultural beliefs and practices, religious philosophies and other gender barriers to women development. This will encourage women capacity to active participation in entrepreneurial leadership of all works of life.
3. State Ministry of Women affairs Commission in collaboration with State CASSON to organised seminars, conferences, symposium and workshops to expose women on entrepreneurial leadership training programme.

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