



## **Gender Variance and the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Small and medium scale industries usually tend to develop and grow into medium and large scale industries. This form of growth yields to the development of the economy. However, the success of SMEs depends on the effort of the entrepreneurs through concerted effort of financing and effective managerial skills. This study tries to determine between men and women who perform better in business success. The study collected data from 204 entrepreneurs and tested the variation between men and women, with difference of two-means. The result revealed that there is no difference between men and women in the performance of business in Nigeria. The study recommended that in negative perception of women managerial and leadership role and government should empower women through implementable policies that will disabuse the negative perception of women in business.

**Key words:** SMEs, variation, performance, gender

### **INTRODUCTION**

Small Scale Business is a key factor in the economic development of any nation, which gradually become the focus for public policy designed to increase employment and to decrease unemployment in both developed and developing countries. The findings by economists like Adams Smith and Max Webber over the years revealed that small firms and entrepreneurship plays a vital role in the economic growth and development of most countries. Globally, SMEs have proven to be the surest bet to achieve growth and create employment simultaneously. They account for 50% to 80% employment, 20% to 50% export earnings and 40% to 70% of GDP of most countries in the world (Adelaja, 2006). Developed nations such as United State of America, United Kingdom, Netherlands, France, Japan and many others

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concentrated on the advantages provided by SMEs during their industrialization process to attain the levels of development they have today.

In Nigeria, SMEs have also contributed significantly to growth a 79% employment, 38% in export earnings and 40% on the GPD (Adelaja, 2006). Hence, there has been increased prominence of SMEs as key factors to economic development. The government of Nigeria introduced the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in the economic policy agenda in 2003. This programme was carried out through poverty alleviation, rural industrialization, job creation and crucial development among others. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was also introduced to act as an important catalyst in the efforts set by the Federal Government to revamp the economy (Nwachukwu, 1991). According to the Federal Ministry of Industries, the prospects of achieving the goals of industrialization and self reliance through SMEs are anchored on Nigeria's abundant human and natural resources which are catalyst for SMEs which themselves form the basic foundation of industrialization process. The importance of small and medium scale enterprises to the socio-economic and political development of a country cannot be over-emphasized. This has led to the formulation of policies, plans and strategies leading to the development of the SMEs.

The role assigned to entrepreneurship for economic growth and development especially in the developed economies such as USA, Britain, Japan, Canada and others made most developing economies to adjust their developmental concept and plan and see new enterprise development as very vital to their economic problems. Entrepreneurship as the engine of economic growth and wheel that pedal the vehicle of economic development has been recognized for its importance in the area of job creation, revenue generation, poverty alleviation and wealth creation. This concept is now identified as the central element in the theory of economic development (Schumpeter, 1934 and Josiane, 1998) and it makes up the largest business sector in economies. It has been recognized as the driver of employment and economic growth (Culkin and Smith 2000, Peacock, 2004; Wang, Walker and Redmond, 2006).

Entrepreneurship is important for the support of small and medium enterprises (United Nations, 2006). With an active Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sub- sector in the production process, developed and less developed countries are expected to depend less on large industries to drive their economy towards posterity. This is because economic renewal and growth is expected to be increasingly driven within the vehicle of enterprise creation and the industry clusters. Entrepreneurship is therefore a process that involves a willingness to rejuvenate market offerings, innovate, risks taking, trying out of new and uncertain products, services, markets and being more proactive than competitors towards exploring new business opportunities (Covin and Slevin, 1991 and Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). It attracts both men and women who are interested in profitable inter-industry relationship.

This paper intends to add knowledge on the reasons for the female/male performance gap. It tries to investigate gender differences in business outcome using risk taking ability/skills, creativity skills, need for achievement, information on the characteristics of the firm, the founder's education and experience, and his/her motivation and goals.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of SMEs is dynamic and relative (Otokiti, 1985; Olorunshola, 2004; Ogunleye, 2004). Several institutions and agencies defined SMEs differently with parameters such as employee's size, asset base, turnover, financial strength, working capital and size of the business (Olutunla, 2001). Nigerian Industrial Policy 1989 defined SMEs as 'enterprise whose investment in working capital is between N100,000 and N2m excluding cost of land'. CBN Monetary Policy Circular No. 22 of 1998 defined SMEs as any enterprise whose investments including land and working capital is less than N300,000 and annual turnover is less than N5m.

The Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) also defined small enterprise as an enterprise that has investment and working capital not exceeding N750,000 and medium enterprise as one with N750,000 to N3m. The Federal Ministry of Industry Guidelines to Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industries (NBCI) also defined it as business with a total cost not exceeding N500,000 (excluding cost of land but including working capital).

The concept of entrepreneurship has a complex tradition within economic theory and any attempt to formulate a succinct definition will inevitably exclude a valuable element of this history (Bygrave and Hofer, 1991). According to McClelland (1961), entrepreneurship is "a dynamic process created and managed by an individual, the entrepreneur, who strives to exploit economic innovation to create new value in the market toward achieving a particular need." In an attempt to offer a definition that is suitable for an indigenous setting, Akeredolu-Ale (1975) viewed entrepreneurship. They are individual-personal attributes of the entrepreneurs, and the socio-cultural determinant of the such attributes, intra-firm/organizational factors, (especially organizational structure, organizational functions) and the overall social and economic environment. Okotiki (1987) looked at entrepreneurship in the form of the determinant of its development and creation in the newly industrial country, or analysis that showed education, family background capital outlay and level of previous experience and level of exposure to be significantly associated with its human development.

The concept of gender needs to be understood clearly as a cross-cutting socio-cultural variable. It is an overarching variable in the sense that gender can also be applied to all other cross-cutting variables such as race, class, age, ethnic group, etc. Gender systems are established in different socio-cultural contexts which determine what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman/man and girl/boy in these specific contexts. Gender roles are learned

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through socialization processes; they are not fixed but are changeable. Gender systems are institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, and culture and traditions. In utilizing a gender approach the focus is on individual women and men and on the system which determines gender roles/responsibilities, access to and control over resources, and decision-making potentials. Therefore, it is also important to emphasize that the concept of gender is not interchangeable with women.

According to UN (2006), gender refers to *both* women and men, and the relations between them. Gender is concerned with the difference and engagement of men as well as women. In recent years there has been a much stronger direct focus on men in research on gender perspectives. The perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of both women and men must be taken into consideration not only as a matter of social justice but because they are necessary to enrich development processes (UN 2006).

Traditionally, gender differences in entrepreneurial activity have been attributed to differences in human and social capital, differences in risk tolerance (Jianakoplos and Bernasek, 1998) and management styles (Brush, 1990, 1992), and to the fact that women tend to be more sensitive than men to a variety of non-monetary factors (Boden, 1999; Lombard, 2001; Burke et al., 2002). On the other hand, Lefkowitz (1994) has shown that men and women tend to react to the same set of incentives and that much of the difference across genders disappears after correcting for some socio-economic conditions.

### **Empirical Review**

Ogundele, Rasaan & Doyin-Hassan (2012), examined the differences that existed between male and female managers occupying leadership positions in Nigerian business organizations. Lagos State was chosen as the study area because of its cosmopolitan nature and because it has in it, a concentration of the headquarter companies of most Nigerian organizations where a significant number of their top managers were domiciled. The responses of one hundred and fifteen (115) purposively sampled male and female managers spread all over 20 private organizations and 12 government ministries in Nigeria were analyzed and three (3) hypotheses were tested, using a one-way ANOVA statistical tool, and it was discovered that: Women leaders were different from their male counterparts in terms of aspiration and leadership style, while demographics of age, work experience and academic achievements were significantly related to the leadership style adopted by a manager. The study only focused on a particular region which is inductive in nature. With a small sample size of 115, it is not enough to conclude that there are differences in male and female leadership styles.

According to Tsyganova and Shirokova (2010), in their work; Gender differences in entrepreneurship: evidence from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data, that female entrepreneurial activity is considered a key

element of economic growth worldwide, and especially in emerging markets. The present study explores gender differences in efficiency-driven countries based on the GEM data from 43 countries in 2008, which are grouped into three broad categories depending on the level of GDP per capita as well as the degree at which countries are factor-driven in terms of the primary goods export shares in total exports. Factor-driven economies are characterized by a large agricultural sector. A correlation and regression analyses were conducted and an important finding of the paper is that training on starting a new business as a common factor, has a greater influence on female entrepreneurial activity. Therefore, training should be considered an essential issue when designing government policies and stimulating entrepreneurial activity in general, of both female and male entrepreneurs.

Wilson, Kickul and Marlino (2007), in *Gender, Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, and Entrepreneurial Career Intentions: Implications for Entrepreneurship Education*, The relationships between gender, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial Intentions were examined for two sample groups: adolescents and adult master of business administration (MBA) students. A total of 4,292 surveys were analyzed, 3,028 from female students and 1,264 from male students (males were underrepresented in the analysis due to a research focus on teen girls). The sampling error at 95% confidence for this sample was +1-1.5%. Using Means and Standard Deviations (SDs), the overall analysis supports earlier research on gender, self-efficacy, and career intentions, specifically in the realm of entrepreneurship. As hypothesized, females showed significantly lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy than males in both middle/high school and in MBA programs. The similarity in self-efficacy patterns across these two very different life stages is of particular interest. Notably, teen girls-with far fewer life experiences-demonstrate the same pattern in this regard as do adult female MBA students. It is found that a strong gender effects on both entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intentions at the middle/high school level, supporting earlier research on self-efficacy differences in those career areas that seem to reflect gender-based role expectations. While it did not measure gender stereotyping for different career paths, the results, taken together with previous research on self-efficacy and career intentions, suggested that entrepreneurship may still be perceived as a "male" field, and that young women may be limiting their career aspirations because they feel that they do not have the requisite skills and abilities. Even among women who have chosen a management career path and are actively pursuing their MBA degrees, these differences in entrepreneurial self-efficacy persist.

### **Gender and sex**

Gender stereotype is a common belief about what psychological traits are characteristic of each sex (Deaux and LaFrance, 1998; Eagly et al., 2000). The male stereotype is characterized by high amounts of "masculine" traits that are task-oriented or agentic (dominance, autonomy, and achievement),

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while the female stereotype is characterized by high amounts of “feminine” traits that are interpersonally-oriented or communal (deference, nurturance, and affiliation). Gender stereotypes are both prescriptive and descriptive; that is, beliefs about the traits that males and females actually possess translate into beliefs about the traits that males and females should possess (Eagly et al., 2000). Gender during childhood and adolescence is facilitated by parents, schools, peers, and the mass media, encourages adherence to gender stereotypes (Deaux and LaFrance, 1998; Eagly et al., 2000; Ruble and Martin, 1998).

Gender identity has two independent masculinity and femininity: masculinity is the extent to which one possesses traits associated with males such as aggressiveness, ambition, dominance, and independence; and femininity, is the extent to which one possesses traits associated with females such as compassion, sensitivity to the needs of others, understanding,

#### **Men and Women Business (SMEs) Characteristics**

The businesses owned and managed by men and women are different. Women’s businesses tend to be smaller and to grow less than those owned by men (DuReitz and Henrekson, 2000; Coleman, 2002). Also, women’s businesses tend to be less profitable than those of men (Robb and Wolken, 2002) and to generate lower sales turnover than men, even in same-industry comparisons (Chaganti and Parasuraman, 1996).

Women in developing countries, like their counterparts in more developed ones, rely more than men on extended families (Brush, 1992; Greve and Salaff, 2003; Justo and DeTienne, 2008), which, in many rural settings are often their only or major social network. Women entrepreneurs require confidence, leadership and managerial skills for their accessibility to new markets. Entering into business as a woman offers challenges of learning how to effectively operate the activities of such business while simultaneously attempting to meet all other expectations that are part of entrepreneurship (Schaefer, 2003).

The masculine view of entrepreneurship is commonly depicted as strategically and competitively focused (Bird and Brush, 2002) such that “the sole purpose of business formation is to maximize wealth” (DeMartino et al., 2006). Prior studies of the factors that influence business owners' feelings of satisfaction in their careers have concentrated on objective measures of success based on business size (e.g. number of employees, sales) or financial performance (e.g. profits, return on investment) rather than more subjective “lifestyle” measures (Walker and Brown, 2004). As theories of women’s careers suggest (Powell and Mainiero, 1992), female business owners may place greater emphasis on socio-emotional career satisfiers derived from interpersonal relations with employees and customers and the pursuit of social goals (Bird and Brush, 2002; Brush, 1992) and less emphasis on status-based career satisfiers derived from financial success and business

growth (Cliff, 1998; DeMartino and Barbato, 2003) than male business owners do.

### METHODOLOGY

This study examined the difference in the performance level of men and women entrepreneurs using some selected SMEs. Likert scaled questionnaires were issue out to men and women who own one SMEs business or the other. The questions ranging from Management deficiency, Unclear determination of business sector, Lack of interest and dissatisfaction with work or work place, Problems of partnership and teamwork, Independence, Internal locus of control, Government policies, Non-financial support from banks and financial institutions and Non related experience, expertise and to good working relationships, were rate by men and women to determine the variation between them on how their rating on above mentioned variables affect performance in business. A total of 204 sets of questionnaires were collected and was analyzed and interpreted by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer software program. The variation in gender in the performance of business in Nigeria was tested using the difference of t-test. It is stated as

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right) \left(\frac{s_1^2(n_1 - 1) + s_2^2(n_2 - 1)}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}\right)}}$$

$$df = n_1 + n_2 - 2$$

Where:

$X_1$  = the mean responses rate of the men

$X_2$  = the mean response rate of women

$n_1$  = sample of the variables influencing business performance of the men

$n_2$  = sample of the variables influencing business performance of the women

$S_1^2$  = sample variance of the variables influencing business performance of men

$S_2^2$  = sample variance of the variables influencing business performance of women

Df= degree of freedom.

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**RESULT**

**Table 1:** shows the mean response rate of the variables influencing business performance of men.

Variables	5	4	3	2	1	Men (Mean Rate)
Management deficiency	120	52	24	4	4	4.37
Unclear determination of business sector	104	72	20	4	4	4.31
Lack of interest and dissatisfaction with work or work place	152	36	12	4	0	4.65
Problems of partnership and teamwork	80	60	40	16	8	4.65
Independence	60	80	32	8	24	3.71
Internal locus of control	24	80	56	20	24	3.29
Non related experience, expertise and good work relationships	68	42	56	20	8	3.55
Government policies	44	56	100	4	0	3.67
Non-financial support from banks and financial institutions	42	68	32	32	20	3.25

Source: field survey 2013

**Table 2:** shows the mean response rate of the variables influencing business performance of women .

Variables	5	4	3	2	1	Women (Mean Rate)
Management deficiency	120	64	16	4	0	4.47
Unclear determination of business sector	96	68	40	0	0	4.47
Lack of interest and dissatisfaction with work or work place	168	4	24	8	0	4.63
Problems of partnership and teamwork	80	28	64	24	8	3.73
Independence	40	88	32	24	20	3.51
Internal locus of control	44	32	32	42	44	2.80
Non related experience, expertise and good work relationships	40	80	72	12	0	3.73
Government policies	80	56	44	8	16	3.86
Non-financial support from banks and financial institutions	84	56	32	16	3	3.86

Source: field survey 2013



**Table 3:** Mean rate of variable influencing Business Performance of men and women.

Variables	Women (Mean Rate)	Men (Mean Rate)
Management deficiency	4.47	4.37
Unclear determination of business sector	4.47	4.31
Lack of interest and dissatisfaction with work or work place	4.63	4.65
Problems of partnership and teamwork	3.73	4.65
Independence	3.51	3.71
Internal locus of control	2.80	3.29
Non related experience, expertise and good work relationships	3.73	3.55
Government policies	3.86	3.67
Non-financial support from banks and financial institutions	3.86	3.25

Source: author computation.

The difference of two-means (t-test) was used to test the variation in the performance of business between men and women entrepreneurs. The objective is to evaluate if the businesses managed by men and women have any difference in performance or are they the same, given that women show potentials effective management of business than the men. The study employed excels software in running the *t-test*. The result is presented below.

**Table 4:** t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means.

	Women	Men
Mean	3.82375	3.885
Variance	0.319198214	0.3282
Observations	8	8
Pearson Correlation	0.655147008	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	7	
t Stat	-0.36661351	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.362369055	
t Critical one-tail	1.894578605	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.72473811	
t Critical two-tail	2.364624252	

The study applied the p-value and the level of significance for decision rule. The null hypothesis is upheld if the p-value is better than the level of significance. Otherwise, reject it, if level of significance is better than the p-

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value. From table 2 above, at both one tailed and two tailed test, the p-values are 0.362 and 0.725 respectively. They are both greater than the 0.05 level of significance. It can be concluded that the null hypothesis is upheld, which means that, there is no significant variation in the performance of men and women in business performance. This implies that, businesses perform better irrespective of the gender for as long as the rules to business are applied by either the men or the women. This result is consistent to Ogundele, Rasaan & Doyin-Hassan (2012). They examined the differences that existed between male and female managers occupying leadership positions in Nigerian business organizations. Lagos State was chosen as the study area because of its cosmopolitan nature and because it has in it, a concentration of the headquarter companies of most Nigerian organizations where a significant number of their top managers were domiciled. It was discovered that Women leaders in businesses were different from their male counterparts in terms of aspiration and leadership style, while demographics of age, work experience and academic achievements were significantly related to the leadership style adopted by a manager.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results in table 4 above show that there is no variation between the business performance of men and women. Therefore, the success or failure of any SMEs in Nigeria is not attributed to any gender. A business failure may happen as a result of poor management skills, insufficient marketing, and lack of ability to compete with other similar businesses. The study revealed that men are not better than women in business nor are women better than the men in handling and running of successful SMEs, which have the ability of reducing unemployment, promoting industrialization and enhancing the growth of the economy in Nigeria.

In retrospect, the study on the variation of men and women performance in the success of business in Nigeria, one major thing to put into consideration in ensuring that women succeed in and make a successful entrepreneur in Nigeria, is to disabuse the mind of people's perception about the role of women in entrepreneurship. Women must be looked at as their men counter-parts in being successful in business.

Women should be given the same opportunity as the men in terms of financial accessibility, leadership role in businesses or organizations; women should not be relegated to the background i.e. domesticated role.

Government policies should be reviewed on the empowering women to meet the levels of their men counter parts so as to effectively perform in the success of their business.

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