

Full Length Research

# The Role of Women-Owned Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Lafia Municipal Area Council of Nasarawa State-Nigeria

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Business enterprise is an investment that is expected to satisfy human needs and then yields positive returns in both short and long run. They are organizations grouped according to their sizes, employment capacity and assets based among other important factors. However, in developing countries, SMEs are the dominant forms of business that is set up and are founded in almost all communities. This indeed is linked to the believed that they are responsible for most of the advances in new products and process and provide most of the employment opportunities and it is also a key indicator of overall performance of any economy in the world. the dynamic nature of SMEs also makes it vulnerable to high mortality rate occasioned by sudden shifts in economic policy, global trends, global shocks in international markets and many unforeseen situations. it is a fact that the lean nature and size of this sector, which underscores its vulnerability, is also its key assets. These enterprises are often times more flexible and can easily rise up to and adapt to sudden change in situations locally and globally. However, the total population of women owned SMEs is not known by the researcher, the study proposes a sample size of 600 respondents (100 from sample from the municipal council) obtained by Cochran formula for computing sample sizes. The study used two sampling techniques, namely simple random and purposive sampling techniques in selecting the respondents. purposive random sampling is used to select only women that owned SMEs in the study area. Simple random sampling is used for the selection of respondents used from the selected municipal area. The aim of this study was to assess. the role of women-owned SMEs in Lafia Municipal area council Nasarawa State. The study was guided by cross-section survey approach. the population consist on mostly women and a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used as instrument for data collection and the study used both descriptive and inferential tools of statistics for data analysis.

**Keywords:** Small Medium Enterprises, Women-owned, Investment, Performance, Short and Long run.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is true that micro, small and medium enterprises are an establishment that may be classified on the basis of factors such as education, motivation, business characteristics and gender. Evidence from the literature shows that in defining this business, reference is usually made to variables such as number of people employed by the enterprises, investment outlay, the annual turnover or sales and the asset value of the enterprise or a combination of these measures. National Council for Industry (2002) opined that an enterprise is classified as SMEs, if it has a capital outlay of between

N1.5million and N50million including working but excluding the cost of land and our workforce of between 11 to 100 employees. Generally, these enterprises engage in the production of light consumer goods that are primarily related to food and beverages, clothing, electrical parts, automotive parts, manufacture, leather products, soap and detergents, wood works. Fabayo (2009) stated that small scale business in Nigeria is divided into three sectors, namely production sector including agricultural processing, manufacturing, and mining Service sector and trading sector including wholesales and retails.

One of the most rapidly expanding categories of small and medium scale enterprises is that of women owned enterprises, which require attention for a number of reasons partly because the business potentials of women are greatly underdeveloped in many societies and in developing economies like Nigeria in particular. Yet, women clearly play a very important role in many respects, including in the local economy. By forming women owned enterprises, women are often able to overcome traditional boundaries. Women owned enterprises now account for a growing share of all new enterprises in many economies. The advent of new technologies and organizational changes represent great opportunities to be explored by women who are business minded. Most of the developing countries have witnessed an influx of the number of women venturing in the field of entrepreneurship in recent years; this mainly being attributed to advocacy on women empowerment programs and policies advanced by both government and non-governmental organizations (Eybenet *et al.* 2008). Studies also indicated that majority of women entrepreneurs own SMEs in developing countries, and their significant contribution to growth domestic production (GDP) and improving income of their households cannot be ignored (Ghosh 2009).

The issues confronting women-owned enterprises are not unrelated to those confronting male enterprises or entrepreneurs in general. While there are limitations on the reliability of statistical data on women owned enterprises, female entrepreneurs in general are associated with activities in the shadow or informal economy. That is, women owned enterprises seem to be pursuing low-key businesses with little growth potential. In many instances, they meet with special cultural and economic barriers throughout the registration and start-up process, as well as during later business development. For women owned enterprises, there are special issues with respect to opportunities for networking and partnering with other firms, and there are managerial and skills issues. Female entrepreneurs in small scale business management tend to pursue business in a limited number of sectors, in which women traditionally are economically active. The majority of women-owned enterprises around the world are employing less than 10 people, hence their generally relatively limited input into total employment.

The number of small and medium enterprise in Nigeria has been on the increase over the years partly because of two important reasons. Firstly, these enterprises require less capital, manpower, technical know-how and managerial skill to start. Secondly, they create employment opportunities to their immediate environments by utilizing local material and human resources thereby promoting economic growth and industrialization. Several studies have also documented the relevance of SMEs in various developed and emerging economies. Fan (2003) reported that SMEs account for 55% of the gross domestic product of high income countries and 60% of that of low income countries. Ariyo (2006) noted that SMEs were also engaging more than 65% of the workforce in high income countries and more than 70% workforce in low income countries.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria is among countries in Africa where small medium enterprises are fast becoming the engine room of growth and development. There seems to be no community in the States and Municipal area council. Most of these enterprises are owned by women and in some cases, family businesses are under the custody of women who are more stable at home than their male counterpart. Yet, what is common in that the literacy level of most women who owned these businesses is so low that keeping financing records seems to be a problem and a threat to the performance of their business. Stevenson and St-Onge (2005) observed that women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa are even more disadvantaged when accessing credit from commercial banks because they lack control of family resources like land which can be used as collateral to acquire loans for expanding of their small and medium enterprises. In some cases, also, lack of support from their spouse and family members, especially when the woman is confronted with childcare and domestic chores and issues they also battle with as small business owners. The gender, variables makes their male counterpart to look down on them and sometimes argued that when a woman asked her spouse to assist her in her business, the society sees that as an act of domination on the side of the women and as such frowns at it. It has been argued in literature that in some communities, older women find it difficult to effectively manage their business than women that are young with very high degree of mobility.

However, it is obvious from the literature that most studies lay much emphasis influence of access to financial resources which defined the income level of women in small and medium enterprises on the performance of such set-up, with less attention given to variables such as women marital status, age, educational level and support from family

and spouse. Furthermore, there is paucity of literature on how these variables relate in Lafia Municipal area council of Nasarawa State despite the presence of a lot of SMEs owned by women in the study area. The problem that prompted this study.

### **Research Questions**

To what extent does gender, income, education age category, marital status and family\spouse support influence the performance of women owned small and medium enterprises in Lafia Municipal area council?

### **Objectives of the Study**

To assess the extent of the influence of gender, income level, education level, age category, marital status and family\spouse on the performance of women owned small and medium enterprises in Lafia Municipal area council Nasarawa State.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested statistically at 0.05 level of significance:

**H0<sub>1</sub>. H0<sub>5</sub>:** Gender, income level, education level, age category, marital status and family\spouse has no significant influence on the performance of women owned small and medium enterprises in Lafia Municipal area of Nasarawa State.

## **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

### **Concept of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

One of the significant characteristics of a flourishing and growing economy is a vibrant and blooming MSMEs sector. The dynamic role of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) as a major growth driver in developing economies is well established in development literature. Small scale enterprises are grouped on the basis on factors which include their start-up capital, employment level and assets based among others. Lucky and Olusegun (2012) rightly argued that this is the reason why the definition of SMEs differs across countries, economies, agencies and sectors even though all encompass distinct groups of small and medium scale businesses. Oboniye (2013) defined SME as any business that employs less than 50 persons and has capital less than ₦500,000.

However, it is important to state that in the definition of what constitutes SMEs, where there exists a conflict on classification between employment and assets criteria, the employment criteria take precedence. Also the business can take different forms like private ownership, limited partnership, contract and sub-contracts, cooperatives or associations (Kozak, 2007).

Women owned enterprises in Nigeria such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are globally acknowledged as the oil to lubricate the engine of socio-economic transformation of any nations. Women-owned businesses are one of the fastest growing segments of small businesses in Nigeria with an increase from approximately one million businesses in 1982 to 1.5 million in 1990. Before 1980, women owned about 6% of all Nigerian business. Today women own nearly 30% of all businesses, 50% of all retail businesses, and 10% of all service companies (Kirkwood, 2009). This statistic however, still indicates a relatively lower entrepreneurship rate amongst the female working population. The self-employed category is heterogeneous, and includes employers, own account operators (self-employed), and unpaid family workers – with women overrepresented in the last two (UN, 2015).

### **Concept of Performance**

Business performance is a measure of the efficiency and productivity of resources used in the business. It covers both improvements in financial, output and assets components of a business set-up. In the context of this study therefore, Performance can be viewed as quantitative and qualitative indicator used to assess the progress or other wise of

women owned small enterprises in terms of the financial, productivity and assets of the business using input-output criteria. When the enterprise yields higher positive returns at lesser cost when compared to resources invested, the deduction will be that such an enterprise has performed well. Performance can be defined in various contexts depending whether objective (quantitative/financial) or subjective (qualitative/non-financial) measures are used.

The performance of women entrepreneurs in their businesses has become an important area of recent policy and academic debate. Comparatively little rigorous and in-depth research, however, has been undertaken on the issues of gender and business performance, especially in Nigeria. Srinivasan, Woo and Cooper (1994) defined performance as the act of performing; of doing something successfully; using knowledge as distinguished from merely possessing it. However, performance seems to be conceptualized, operationalized and measured in different in different ways, making cross-cultural comparison difficult. Among the most frequently used operationalizations are survival, growth in employees, and profitability (1992) examined various factors that influence business performance and he categorized performance such as: as experience, education, occupation of parents, gender, race, age, and entrepreneurial goals.

Thibault, Wilcock and Kanetkar (2002) suggested that factors influencing business performance could be attributed to personal factors such as amount of financing, use of technology, age of business, operating location, business structure and number of full-time employees as important factors in examining the performance as small-scale business operators. The most comprehensive summary of factors influencing performance was noted in a literature review by Theo and Chong (2007) to include: individual characteristics, parental influence, business motivation and goals, business strategies, goals and motives, networking, entrepreneurial orientation and environmental factors.

### **Theoretical Review**

This research will be anchored on the theory of performance. The Theory of Performance postulated there are six foundational factors that determine performance. The theory argued that these factors are personality factors, level of knowledge, levels of skills, context, level of identity, and fixed factors (Elger, 2007). Various studies have shown that personality factors such as age, and marital status, have significant influence on the sustainability of businesses. Female business owners face greater challenges when compared to male business owners, hence are less likely to sustain their businesses in the long run. Besides, the significant factors affecting female business owners are significantly different from males stated that educational qualifications as a personality factor also influences business performance.

This theory is relevant to this study on the role of women owned SMEs influencing the performance of women owned small and medium enterprises in the sense that most of these factors are components of the personality factors put forward by the performance hypothesis. Age and marital status of women for instance are demographic factors that may exert influence on the management and performance of these small scale businesses owned by women in the study area. Similarly, women level of education as a factor has been captured in this frame work as one major determinants of how effective a business will perform

### **Empirical Review**

The data was collected through a survey on five major dimension those are assumed to have influence on entrepreneurial decision namely motivational, financial, regulatory and business environmental dimensions. Respondents' opinions from the survey were analyzed through simple descriptive statistics such as percentage and mean to draw findings. The study also revealed that women entrepreneurs of Khulna suffer from lack of financial support, complexity of regulatory systems, gender based discrimination, lack of adequate training facility and environmental support.

Similarly, Vallabh and Mhlang(2015) opined, the study empirically tests whether gender, education and income of the business have a significant impact on the business performance of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the South African context. Quantitative research was deemed appropriate for the study; whereby systematic random sampling was employed to select a sample of 332 respondent organizations. The findings show that the relationship between gender and income in relation to business performance was found to be significant.

Kupangwa and Duhihlela (2016) assessed the influence of selected demographic variables on the adoption and use of electronic business technologies by small and medium-sized retailers. A survey was conducted among employees working in the small and medium-sized retail enterprises operating in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This study utilized analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine the influence of several demographic variables on the e-business technology adoption and use in the context of retailers. This study provides some insights into the perceptions of employees working in the small and medium-sized retail enterprises about the factors that influence e-business

technology adoption and use, as well as the cultures of the businesses in which they are employed. In addition, this study adds to the body of knowledge by indicating the extent to which they perceive the ease of use and relative advantage of e-business technologies. The study above is relevant to this study since it captured the factors which are important components of the independent variable in this study.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used cross-sectional survey design as a guide. The choice of this design was predicated on the fact that the study collected primary data from respondents across the municipal area council of the state within a given period of time using a representative sample of respondents. While the population of the study considered all SMEs owned by women that are available in the municipal area of the states as its target population for the study.

A sample is a portion of a target population scientifically selected to be use for an in-depth-study. Since the total population of women owned small and medium enterprises in the study area. The study used a sample size of 400 respondents from the study area. The study used two sampling techniques, namely simple random and purposive sampling techniques in selecting the respondents and used. Purposive sampling was used to select only women that owned SMEs.

### Method of Data Analysis

The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics as in analyzing the data gathered. Frequency table, frequency counts, cross tabulation, mean and standard deviation was used as descriptive statistics for data analysis. While the hypotheses were tested using binary logistic regression since the independent variables are categorical in nature, while the dependent variable was rated in binary form or yes and no responses.

### Model Specification

The specification of the model shows how the variables related functionally and explicitly. Therefore, the relationship between gender(GD), monthly income (MI), educational qualification (EQ),age category (AC),marital status(MS) and family support (FS) respectively on the performance women owned SMEs in the study Area.

The model in equation one shows that SMEs performance is a function of gender, marital status, educational qualification, age category, marital status and family support such that a change in any of the variable may have effect on the performance of women owned SMEs in the area.

The explicit form of the model is expressed as follows:

$$\text{SMEP} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{GD} + \beta_2 \text{MI} + \beta_3 \text{EQ} + \beta_4 \text{AC} + \beta_5 \text{MS} + \beta_6 \text{FS} + e \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

### Where:

SMEP= small and medium enterprises performance

GD = Gender

MI = Marital status

EQ = Educational qualification

AC= Age category

MS= Marital Status

FS= Family support

e = Error terms that captures the effect of the factors on the performance of women owned SMEs not included in the model.

$\alpha_0$  = Intercept parameter that links the independent and dependent variables.

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6$  = Slope parameters showing the relationship between the independent and dependent variable( and SMEs performance).

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### RESULTS

**Table 1:** Results of Descriptive Analysis of Socio-Demographic Variables

Variables		Frequency (n=380)	Percentage (%=100)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	380	100.0
<b>Monthly Income</b>	less than N300,000	187	49.2
	More than N300,000	193	50.8
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	No formal education	29	7.6
	Primary education	31	8.2
	Secondary education	151	39.7
	Tertiary education	104	27.4
	Others	65	17.2
<b>Age Category</b>	Less than 30 years	80	21.1
	31-60 years	204	53.7
	61 years and above	96	25.3
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	95	25.0
	Married	257	67.6
	Divorced/Separated	28	7.4
<b>Family Support</b>	No	261	68.7
	Yes	119	31.3

**Source:** Field Survey,2023

The results of analysis revealed all the 307 respondents representing 100.0 percent on the other hand were female. Furthermore, it was found that 187 respondents representing 49.2 percent earned less than N300,000 monthly and 193 respondents representing 50.8 percent earned more than N300,00. The results also showed that 29 respondents or 7.6 percent had no formal education,31 respondents or 8.2 percent had primary education,151 respondents representing 39.7 percent had secondary education, 104 respondents or 27.4 percent had tertiary education certificate and only 65 respondents representing 17.2 percent on the other hand had other educational qualifications.

Similarly, the findings revealed that 80 respondents representing 21.1 percent were less than 30 years,204 respondents representing 53.7 percent were between the age category of 31-60 years and 96 respondents representing 25.3 percent were 61 years and above. This implies that majority of the respondents were 31-60 years of age. The result indicated that 95 respondents representing 25.0 percent were single,257 respondents representing 67.6 percent were married and only 28 respondents representing 7.4 percent were either divorced or separated. This suggests that majority of the respondents were married. The analysis of the descriptive characteristics of the respondents also established that 261 respondents representing 68.7 percent said there had no support from their families and 119 respondents representing 31.3 percent on the other hand said they had support from their families. This implies that majority of the owners of women SMEs had support from their families.

**Table 2:** Results of Binary Regression Estimation

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
GD	-41.002	17.011	12.891	1	.008	.000
MI	0.686	75.400	6.133	1	.000	1.986

**Continuation of Table 2.**

EQ	21.459	83.814	3.542	1	.000	.903
AC	-0.094	73.388	2.760	1	.880	.910
MS	22.070	14.084	3.653	1	.009	2.666
FS	-21.695	56.318	1.116	1	.002	.000
Constant	2.203	29.035	3.235	1	.000	.110

**Source:** Researcher's Computation using SPSS Version 2026

The results of binary logistic regression in Table 2 revealed that gender (GD) had a coefficient of 41.002 and a probability value of 0.008, which means  $p < 0.05$ . This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected and the conclusion is that gender had a significant negative effect on the performance of women-owned SMEs in the study area. Furthermore, it was found that monthly income (MI) had a coefficient of 0.686 and a p-value of 0.000, which shows that  $p < 0.05$  and the null hypothesis was also rejected and the conclusion drawn is that monthly income had a significant positive effect on the performance of SMEs owned by women in the study area. More so, it was found that educational qualification (EQ) had a coefficient of 21.459 and a p-value of 0.000 or  $p < 0.05$  and the conclusion drawn is that educational qualification had a significant positive effect on the performance of women-owned SMEs in the study area. Similarly, the findings revealed that age category (AC) had a coefficient of -0.094 and a p-value of 0.880, which means that the p-value is greater than 0.05 and there was not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis; it was retained or accepted and the study concluded that age category had an insignificant negative effect on the performance of SMEs in the study area. The results also found that marital status (MS) had a coefficient of 22.070 and a p-value of 0.009, which means  $p < 0.05$ ; hence the null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that marital status had a significant positive effect on the performance of women-owned SMEs in the study area. Also, it was found that family support had a coefficient of -21.695 and a p-value of 0.002, which means  $p < 0.05$  and the null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that family support had a significant negative effect on the performance of women-owned SMEs in the municipal area.

**Table 3: Diagnostic Tests**

Test Statistic	Coefficient	p-value	Decision
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test	23.065	.000	Good-Fit
Cox & Snell R Square	.275	-	Good-fit
Nagelkerke R Square	.254	-	Good-fit

**Source:** Researcher's Computation using SPSS Version 2026

The analysis of the fitness of the model in Table 3 revealed that the Hosmer and Lemeshow test (H-L) indicates a good fit of the model with a value of 23.065, and  $p < 0.05$ . However, since it has been argued in literature that there are a lot of problems with the Hosmer and Lemeshow test because it is too conservative and, in some cases, cannot detect a model's poor fit (Peng & So, 2002), the Cox and Snell R Square and Nagelkerke R Square tests were used. The findings revealed that the estimated model explained variance between 27.5 per cent (Cox & Snell R Square) and 25.4 per cent (Nagelkerke R Square) of the errors in the model. Thus, unlike the conventional adjusted R square where the higher the value, the better the goodness-of-fit of the model, these Pseudo R square coefficients are better if their values are smaller because the emphasis is on the percentage of errors in the model.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from reviewed literature showed that women played an important role in creating jobs through their participation in the ownership and management of SMEs in the study area. However, it has been reported that the role of women in SMEs can be influenced by some factors. The findings from this study found that gender, age category, and family support had significant negative effects on the performance of women-owned SMEs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following among others have been recommended as ways of limiting the negative effect on the performance of women owned SMEs in the study area: Government should ensure that women are provided with conducive business environment, tax holidays and financial support, while stakeholders should periodically train women on business management in order to improve on their skills for the needed support to effectively manage SMEs in the area. Women who are married should be assisted by their spouse and family members so that they can effectively manage their business for better performance.

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