

Women Entrepreneurship Development and Poverty Alleviation: Experience from Nigeria Small and Medium Enterprises

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Abstract

The emphasis on the impact of entrepreneur development on poverty reduction is a source of concern for entrepreneurs, scholars, practitioners, and governments in developing economies such as Nigeria. The poverty situation in Nigeria is the concept of feminization of poverty in the sense that women make up a larger percentage of the poor. More so, the inability of the existing programmes on entrepreneurial development to improve the participation of women in entrepreneurial activities is a pointer to the need for further empirical investigation. The extent of women's involvement in entrepreneurship toward poverty reduction is worthy of exploration in Nigeria. This study therefore, examine the impact of women's entrepreneurship development on poverty alleviation among small and medium-sized enterprises in Lagos State. The study employed both primary and secondary data. The population of the study comprises of A total of 1,396,777 active micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) entrepreneurs in Lagos state who had at one time or the other benefited from entrepreneurship support programs. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The results of descriptive analysis revealed that women's entrepreneurship programs are a means of women's entrepreneurship development and income earned also form a mean to women's entrepreneurship development. The results ($R^2=0.652$; Adj $R^2 = 0.647$, $P= 0.001$) of multiple regression revealed that there is a positive and significant effect of the women's entrepreneurship programme on poverty alleviation. The study concluded that women's participation in entrepreneurship development positively influences poverty allegation in Nigeria. It was recommended that the government should spend more on programmes that can strengthen women's entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Keywords: *Economic Development: Entrepreneurial Improvement: Women Entrepreneurship Development: Poverty Alleviation*

Introduction

The Nigerian economy has been characterized by the paradox of growth without poverty reduction and the trickle-down effect of growth on the poor slow response of government to the endemic and persistent problem of poverty and poor governance (Oghojafor, Olayemi, Okonyi, and Olayiwola, 2011). The major causes of poverty as identified by the UNICEF (2019) are deficiency in national policy and empowerment programmes, infrastructural decayed, lack of economic diversification and instability in political atmosphere. Misango and Ogiti (2013) reported that women fall victims of poverty than male counterparts due to gender imbalance and restricted access to finance. Accordingly, Fapohunda (2012) averred that the increasing poverty among women arises from their unequal situation in the labour market, their status and power in the family. Women's wages are below average. Empirical evidence showed that some socio-cultural impediments have limited women with impetuous entrepreneurial aspiration from actualizing their dream which mainly contributes to the feminization of poverty in Nigeria (Deedam and Onoja, 2015; Omoniyi, 2013).

Women entrepreneurship has witnessed a surge of attention as a subject of academic debate in the last two decades due to their immense importance as forces in economic growth and development of their nations which is the crux of poverty alleviation (Agbionu, Ikon, and Chinwe 2015). Women entrepreneurs participate in total entrepreneurial activities; hence, they take risks involved in combining resources in a unique way so as to take advantage of the opportunities identified in their immediate environments through the production of goods and services (Ukommi and Agha, 2016; Chinonye, 2010). The concept of women entrepreneurship is rapidly gaining ground both in the academic and professional environments across the globe as a veritable tool for alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable economic growth and development particularly in developing economies like Nigeria (World Bank, 2018; Vinesh, 2014). Increasing the role of women in the economy is pivotal to eradication of poverty and increasing economic viability (Mwirebua and Evans, 2017). Agbionu, Agbionu, Ikon, Chinwe (2015) opined that women have been and are still agents of poverty alleviation because any meaningful growth and development must address the tenets of poverty alleviation. The involvement of women in entrepreneurship businesses have greatly assisted in poverty alleviation and foster sustainable economic growth and development in both developed and developing economies (Manerkar, 2015). Nevertheless, Akabueze (2012) indicated that lack of finance, restriction on mobility, limited decision making, men's dominance, family pressure and discrimination are major barriers in the way of women entrepreneurialism.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a critical part in the economic growth of countries and their performance is closely associated with the performance of the nation. Performance is a process or the manner by which the business owner or manager of SMEs executes their functions and crucial element to improving business performance in organizations (Ignis, 2002). The performance and growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is a major driver and indices for the level of industrialization, modernization, urbanization, gainful and meaningful employment for all those who are able and willing to work, income per capital, equitable distribution of income, and the welfare and quality of life enjoyed by the citizenry (Abubaka and Yahya, 2013), because SMEs contribute to employment growth at a higher rate than larger firms (Abiodun, 2014).

Poverty has been described to have predominant woman face in both developing and industrialized countries (Odejide, 1997). Fajimi and Omonona (2011) citing Neo-Leen (1996) reported that more than 564 million women live in absolute poverty. Subsequently, the exit rate of

new businesses is high everywhere (40–50 %), exit rates of women-owned businesses are even higher, especially in developing countries. Some reasons mentioned for high exit rates among women entrepreneurs are lack of financing, insufficient profitability, and family responsibilities. According to Abdul Salam, Elsegaey, Khraif, and Al-Mutairi (2014), in Nigeria poverty appear to be feminization because it is frequent in the midst of women-headed households than in the midst of men-headed households. Akabueze (2002) succinctly stated that it would seem reasonable to expect that women participation in small businesses would grow and flourish, but the rate of business failure continues to increase because of the obstacles affecting their business performances. In spite the inherent problems associated with the growth of small-scale businesses and failure of the various poverty alleviation programmes, women entrepreneurs are increasingly venturing into ownership of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) either on their own or in partnership with male entrepreneurs (International Labour Organization, ILO, 2005). This has been made possible primarily because of ease of entry, limited access to other enterprises and lack of employment opportunities in formal sector of the economy including precarious empowerment and poverty alleviation strategies that yielded no significant impact in recent past. Also, given the growth of entrepreneurship among women, understanding the social and economic factors influencing their success performance is of critical importance particularly due to mixed findings and inconclusive results. Therefore, this study intends to explore on women entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation among small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Statement of problem

Neglecting of women entrepreneurship development constitutes a waste of human resource potential Chinonye, Iyiola, Akinbode, Obigbemi, and Eke, 2015, because women are catalyst for economic growth and they play a complementary role in the fight against poverty alleviation. The federal Government of Nigeria has in the recent times recognized the indispensable roles of women especially in entrepreneurship. This is why former president of Nigeria Dr. Goodluck, through the Central Bank mapped out a huge sum of money to encourage the entrepreneurial activities of the women but this financial assistance program (Youwin women) seems not to have reached these women since as observed in literature. However, the potentials are currently being undermined by the fact that women lack access to and control over financial and other forms of resources and government intervention has been marred with inadequate and untimely release of funds by the government; inappropriate staffing and logistics problems (Ogidi, 2014).

Also, there is dearth of information on the extent of financial assistance from government and the impact of women entrepreneurs on poverty alleviation in Lagos State. Women entrepreneurs are confronted with weak financial base and socio-cultural hindrances (Chinonye, Iyiola, Akinbode, Obigbemi and Eke, 2015). The inability of the existing programmes on entrepreneurship development to improve participation of women in entrepreneurial activities is a pointer to the need for further empirical study of this nature. Therefore, the study contributed to existing knowledge on the extent to which women participation in entrepreneurship alleviates poverty among SMES in Lagos State by providing needed guide on how woman can be efficient in money management skill which will in turn alleviate poverty.

Research Hypotheses

- Ho₁: entrepreneurship programme has no significant effect on poverty alleviation among women entrepreneurs in Lagos State
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between earned income and poverty alleviation among women entrepreneurs in Lagos State.

Literature review

Conceptual Review

Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs are economic and social change agents (Rosca, Agarwal and Brem, 2020). Entrepreneur is any individual that invest and establishes new business with substantial risk bearing, innovativeness and creativity. It entails use of limited resources to create wealth, exploits opportunities and achieve sustainable capital accumulation. Meanwhile, Chinomona *et al.* (2014) viewed entrepreneurs as individual or group of individuals that conceives and acquire entrepreneurship ideas with moderate risk taking, and effective use of limited resources at his disposal. An entrepreneur is defined as a self-motivated individual with creativity and inventions geared towards value creation (Anderson, 2012). Bell (2013) posits that the principal entrepreneurial role in less developed nations Nigeria inclusive is the ability to acquire, adapt and modify the existing large stock of proven technical innovations already available in the advanced countries of the world. Entrepreneurs are people who recognize the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of their enterprise and build opportunity for its success (Farlie, 2011).

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is viewed as the recognition of opportunities and the utilization or creation of resources to implement innovative ideas for new, thoughtfully planned ventures (Carpenter and Dunung, 2012). It can be defined in terms of learning technical, management and organizational skills. For instance, Ezeani, Ifeonyenatalu and Ezemoying (2012) considers entrepreneurship as a process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas, combining them with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby create wealth. It is the intelligence and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully.

Consequently, entrepreneurship can also be viewed in terms of its investment ability and innovative skills (Ekon and Ekon, 2016). Izedonmi and Okafor (2010) defined entrepreneurship as the intentional creation or transformation of an organization for the purpose of creating and adding value through utilization of resources. Subsequently, entrepreneurship as a process gives people more jobs, creates new inventions and ideas, stimulates national income, consequently having the potential of affecting economic development (Abosede and Onakoya, 2013). Obasan and Soyebbo (2011) posits that entrepreneurship as a dynamic process created and managed by an individual, which strives to exploit economic innovation to create new value in the market. Meanwhile, Phina and Nkiru (2020) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurship can be considered as an act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit.

Entrepreneurship constitutes a vital engine for economic, social, practical and all-round development of any country and it has been identified by many, both globally and nationally as a

tool for a sustainable, virile and stable economy (Baba, 2013; Akpomi, 2009). In Nigeria, entrepreneurship development and innovations have been manifested in all aspects of the economy via micro business, micro finance, small and medium industries, information/telecom services, personal services in food vending/restaurant, garments making, embroidering, agricultural produce, music and film production (Thaddeus, 2012). This is why successive governments in Nigeria attempted to strengthen relevant agencies in order to achieve this position. It has been well reported that no country can as a matter of truth, move forward technologically, industrially and economically without developing strong private partnership initiative in the creation of wealth, poverty reduction and employment generation (Akpomi, 2009; Baba, 2013). Nevertheless, Sanusi (2010) stressed that the major challenges of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria are; security threats, restricted access to finance, corruption, high cost of business start-up and multiple taxation. Entrepreneurship foster increase in women, ethnic and minority participation in small and medium enterprises businesses and in turn alleviates poverty (Iliya, Abdullahi, Adama and Audu, 2017).

Entrepreneurship Development and Poverty Alleviation

Entrepreneurship is viewed today as a key driver of economic growth (Tende, 2013). This is because small rapidly growing firms started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, create wealth and a significant number of jobs in particular economies, thereby impacting greatly on social and economic development (Mohammad and Abul, 2014). Entrepreneurship development contributes to poverty reduction when it creates employment through the establishment of new entrepreneurship or the expansion of existing ones and they increases social wealth by creating new markets, new industries, new technology, new institutional forms, new jobs and net increases in real productivity, increases income which culminates in higher standards of living for the population (Simon, 2005 as cited in Anekwe, Ndubuisi and Attah, 2018). Then it is logical to state that if the number of entrepreneurs of any given country increases, the poverty indicators will decrease and vice versa. Mensah and Benedict, 2010; Tambunan, (2008) remarked that there is link between entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation.

Constraints of Women Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

Agbionu, Ikon and Chinwe (2015) acknowledged that women entrepreneurs persistently strive and remain stunted without remarkable output because of neglect by government and the stakeholders. Women entrepreneurs faced gender imbalance (Adekola, Olawole-Isaac, Ajibola and Salau, 2015). Accordingly, Chinaemerem (2014) averred that emotional burden and the dual role responsibilities women are subjected to interfere with their quest for entrepreneurship business and performance. Moreover, gender inequalities in education, limited access to finance, socio-cultural traditions, passive orientation and lack of collateral affects the development of women entrepreneurship business (Ayogu, and Agu, 2015; Cantwell, 2014; Chinomona, 2015; Makena, Kubaison and Njati, 2014). Another major challenge facing women entrepreneurship is religion segregation due to Islamic doctrine in muslim donated countries and the desire by most women entrepreneurs to enjoy business secrecy and secluded environment that limit male interactions (Itani, Sidani and Baalbaki, 2011). Nevertheless, negative remarks and socio-cultural attitudes, low income generatio and lack of quality education affect the growth of women entrepreneurship (Akhalwaya and Havenga, 2012; Ewoh, 2014).

It is worrisome that despite the incentives, favorable policies and regulations and preferential support by government aimed at improving small business enterprises, women entrepreneurs have performed below expectation in Nigeria. While the challenges associated with

women that were actively involved in small business enterprises and their failure has been widely acclaimed. Some of these include lack of planning, inimical government regulations, poor marketing strategies, lack of technical know-how, and lack of capital (Aftab and Rahim 1989, Ekpeyong 1983, Ogechukwu, 2006; Onugu 2005). Yet, some of the challenges of the SMEs and women entrepreneurs are induced by the operating environment (government policy, globalization effects and financial institutions (Ukommi and Agha 2016).

Women entrepreneurs are confronted with weak financial base and socio-cultural hindrances (Chinonye, Iyiola, Akinbode, Obigbemi and Eke, 2015). World bank (2012) reported that women own only one percent world property and are faced with myriad of challenges such as lack of collateral security (Alli and Lawal, 2019; Alli, 2018, Cantwell, 2014). They are equally faced with the challenges of restricted access to market (Ewoh, 2014), shorter loan repayment (Cantwell, 2014), gender inequality and control of properties (Garba, 2011). Other notable hinderances are syndrome of double, triple or multiple taxes and high infant mortality of micro, small and medium enterprises business MSMEs) managed by women between 3-5years of inception (Emmanuel, 2013; Kareem, 2015; Mullins, 2011). Buttner (2003) enumerated factors that affected women's entrepreneurial success to include, entrepreneurial experience (such as the number of previous ventures involvements), quality of products/services and the women's determination to succeed, communication skills, market opportunity, financial management skills, idea generation and motivation (World Bank, 2018).

Alleviating poverty through Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has been playing an important role for the development of the economic growth of a country as well as alleviating poverty through new jobs creation and provide income for the people. MSME's do not only help during the period of economic growth but also in economic recession. The strong turbulence in the world economy in 1970s had made many large firms in developed countries lay off their employees then MSMEs were regarded as the problem solver to these structural changes. The strategic importance of MSMEs in national economic development is widely recognized by many countries, developed and developing countries alike. Simultaneously, there have been reports and evidence of contributions that MSME's make in the process of industrial development. MSMEs remain a vital force in the manufacturing sector and their importance has increased rather than diminished in many countries. An ILO study in 2003 that examined firms with fewer than 10 workers found that they generated 58 per cent of total employment in Paraguay, 54 per cent in Mexico, and 53 per cent in Bolivia, contributed approximately 31per cent of overall GDP in the Dominican Republic, 13 per cent in Kenya, and 11 per cent in Pakistan. MSME's have played a key role in economy of a developing country like Nigeria in terms of turnover, level of employment and serve as a mechanism to fight against poverty as evidenced in the literature (Akande, 2014; Akanji, 2006).

Environmental factors and women Entrepreneurship Development

The unfavourable and unenterprising government policies stunted women entrepreneurship business in Nigeria (Okafor and Mordi, 2010). World Bank (2018) reported that the socio-cultural factors, neglect by financial institutions and infrastructural decay affects women entrepreneurship development. Shah (2013) reported that cultural barriers and political ideology caused variation and major challenges to women entrepreneurship business activities. Whereas the problem of socio-economic imbalances persists and greatly affects the development of women entrepreneurial business (Pooe, Mafini and Makhubele, 2015).

Women entrepreneurs are more faced with stringent and restricted access to finance and are much affected by the socio-cultural and political environment (Adae-Koranke, 2014). They experience declining productivity due to lack of adoption of digital marketing, obsolete technology, poor managerial knowledge and restricted access to government empowerment programmes (Yekinni, Rufai, Adetoba, Akinwale and Ojo, 2012). According to Ukommi and Agha (2016), the low involvement in entrepreneurship and governance as a result of social norms such as cultural norms (Tee, boardi and Opoku, 2016). Adeniyi and Imade (2018) identified infrastructural decade, multiple taxation syndrome (Alashe and Olawore, 2021), and epileptic power supply as the major constraints to women entrepreneurship growth and low participation. The job creating and poverty reducing propensity is extremely important in developing countries, especially among African states. Faseyiku and Akinjole (2014) opined that most of the poor and unemployed Nigerians, in order to better their lots, have resorted to the establishment of their own businesses making entrepreneurship fast becoming a household name in Nigeria. However, as a result of the challenging entrepreneurial environment with regard to levels of development and institutional context, the number of small-scale, informal, self-employed, and often unproductive entrepreneurs outweighs the number of productive, innovative, opportunity-driven entrepreneurs (Bell, 2013). Although, small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) have been seen as an indispensable tool for economic recovery, however, many still believe that small businesses do not survive during economic downturn. This is a common misconception that is not generally true (Small Business Notes, 2017). However, Figueroa-Armijos, Dabson and Johnson, 2013 observed that locally grown entrepreneurship offers unique opportunities for value creation that is resilient especially in times of economic stress. Whereas, Mnewa and Maliti (2018) reiterated that unfriendly tax policies hindered women entrepreneur growth, coupled with prevalence of double taxation that compounded the administrative pressure to comply with tax policies on women entrepreneurs in Nigeria (Fagbemi, Uadile and Noah, 2016). Contrarily, Roohangiz, Shahim and Hajar (2012) argued that socio-cultural and economic factors had positive impact on women entrepreneurs. The scholars emphasized that social factors had more positive significant effect on women entrepreneurs than other external environmental factors.

Theoretical Perspective

The study is anchor on Schumpeter theory because it is germane to the research variables and because women entrepreneurs are innovative individuals with strategic thinking of creative ideas, who exploits market opportunities in the external business environment and utilize limited resources, to achieve basic entrepreneurship goals, create wealth with sustainable growth and profits. The theory shows that ownership is distinct from entrepreneurship and that entrepreneurship does not require ownership of resources but ideas that add value to creativity and uncertainty including risk bearing. Also, the study is underpinned with Schumpeter theory because it emphasized that the success of women entrepreneurship development has a direct relationship with innovation and creativity in order to revolutionized their business activities and this agree with the empirical findings of: Onueghu, 2018; Chowdhury, 2017; Okunnu and Akinjole, 2016; Neufield, 2015; Simpeh, 2014 and Misango and Ongiti, 2013.

Review of empirical studies

Wei, Sarker,^{*} Zukiewicz, Roy, Alam, Rabbany, Hossain, and Aziz, (2021) investigates the effect of women's empowerment on poverty reduction and focuses on household deprivation, in terms of education, health, and standard of living. Primary data was collected from 914 married women from rural areas of Bangladesh using a well-structured questionnaire and a random sampling technique. Descriptive statistics, logistic regression, and ordinary least squares models were used in this study. The results indicate that increased women's access to education, asset ownership, decision-making power on children's health and education, and access to medical facilities, had caused a significant decline in income poverty and multidimensional poverty. However, gender violence, taking resources against women's will, and preventing women from working outside, have caused a considerable decline in per capita income and an increase in income poverty and multidimensional poverty. Women's empowerment has a great impact on the reduction of income poverty and multidimensional poverty in society.

Ndubuisi and Anekwe (2018) examine the effect of entrepreneurship development on poverty alleviation in Nigeria. They identified that one of the major challenges facing developing and underdeveloped countries of the world is poverty. It has been so endemic as a result of the high rate of unemployment that has become the major characteristic of the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world. They adopted qualitative researcher approach for the study and concluded that Entrepreneurship development is a key tool for poverty reduction; stimulating employment and economic growth in developing countries, as Entrepreneurship boosts economic growth, enhances educational attainment and increases the rate of economic growth and for Nigeria to move out of the disturbing high level of poverty. Their work recommends that adequate attention must be given to the growth of entrepreneurship while Entrepreneurship development should be inculcated into the school's curriculum to promote human empowerment and development through entrepreneurial education and training

GU Rui, (2021) examined the impacts of a multi-component program on women's empowerment and poverty reduction, and explore the role empowered women play in poverty reduction. He gathered data from nine poor counties of Ulanqab City in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China at the end of 2014, yielding a sample of 900 households. He employed t-test for data analysis. His results show that the program has positive effects on women's empowerment and poverty reduction simultaneously. Empowering women also has positive effects on poverty reduction, and the women who were the beneficiaries have contributed to increasing the incomes and living standards of households.

Gaps Filled by Current Study

The empirical findings show that despite the numerous literature on entrepreneurship few studies was conducted on women entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation particularly in Lagos Metropolis. Additionally, few studies conducted were in other developing and developed economies while scanty studies conducted on women entrepreneurship in Nigeria gives inconclusive findings. This present study will identify and evaluate various poverty reduction programmes and examine perception of entrepreneurs woman on entrepreneurship development programs toward poverty alleviation in Lagos State Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed both primary and secondary data. The population of the study comprises of A total of 1,396,777 active micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) entrepreneurs in Lagos state who had at one time or the other benefited from entrepreneurship support programs. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Lagos State was stratified into local governments from which samples of women entrepreneurs was drawn from various associations of MSMEs through the simple random sampling procedure of registered female SMEs in Lagos metropolis. Using Yamane's sample determination method as given below, a total of 400 SMEs were selected as sample for the study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N*(e)^2}$$

Model specification

In order to test the direct effect of the relationship between the dependent variable (poverty alleviation) and independent variables (women entrepreneurship development), the general model was specified as:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 \times_1 + \beta_2 \times_2 + \beta_3 \times_3 + e \dots \dots \dots (3.1)$$

Where:

Y = the dependent variable representing poverty alleviation.

X₁ = Women Entrepreneurship Programme (WEP)

X₂ = Women Income Earned (WIE)

X₃ = Women Business Features (WBF)

α, β₁, β₂, β₃ and e = parameters to be estimated and

e is the error term.

Results and Discussion

Response Rate and Respondents' Characteristics

The response rate presented in Table 1 and 2 indicate that the sample size was 400 respondents, out of which 320 representing 80% response rate were correctly filled and returned,

The characteristics of respondents in terms of education, marital status, age, years of operation, sources of finance and relevant areas of specialization were presented in Table 3. The table showed that majority 148 (46.3%) of the women obtained Ordinary National Diploma or National Certificate of Education, 88 (27.5%) had attained university degree or it's HND equivalent, 40 (12.5%) are Senior Secondary School and GCE certificate holders, and 38 (11.9%) had their post graduate degrees while 5 (1.6%) and 1 (0.3%) had no formal schooling and primary education respectively. This implied that most women entrepreneurs had formal educational qualifications which could be beneficial in the day to day running of their businesses. Majority 231 (72.19%) of the respondents were single followed by 79 (24.69%) who were married and 4 (1.25%) were divorced while 6 (1.88%) were widowed. Since majority of the women were single with no responsibilities associated with family and upbringing of children, the women entrepreneurs would have more free time to engage in business and hence attain economic empowerment as a result. Furthermore, majority 188 (58.8%) of the respondents were aged between 20 to 29 years, followed by 67 (20.9%) who were aged between 30-39 years, 27 (8.4%) were between 40 to 49 years and 26 (8.1%) were between 50 to 59 years. This implied that the majority of the entrepreneurs were young and inexperienced hence, the need to mentor them for prudent business management to enhance business sustainability. Majority 166 (51.9%) of the

respondents had been in business between one (1) to five (5) years, followed by 60 (18.8%) of the respondents who had been running their businesses between 6 to 10 years, 46 (14.4%) had been in business for 21 years and above, 22 (6.9%) had been in business for not more than 15 years while 26 (8.1%) had been in business between 16 to 20 years. This implies that the majority of the businesses were relatively in the early period. Hence, the need for guidance on how to brighten their chances of sustainability and growth.

Also, on the issue of sources of finance, majority 272 (86.9%) of the respondents sourced finance for their businesses by themselves, 22 (6.9%) borrowed from friends or relatives, 11 (3.4%) had access to government grants while 9 (2.8%) obtained loan from banks. This implies that considerably low number had access to loan or government grant. For SMEs to survive, government has to come out with policies that will pave the way for loan facilities, at a reasonable interest rate, for would-be entrepreneurs. The area of specialization of the respondents in relevant skills needed as an entrepreneur from the table 4.3 shows that 7.2 percent had finance skill, 9.4 percent had management skill, 12.5 percent had accounting skill, 0.9 percent had audit skill, 15.6 percent had entrepreneurship skill while 54.4 percent had other skills. It was deduced that majority of the respondents do not have relevant skills needed as an entrepreneur

Table 1: Respondents' response rate

Sample Size	Number	Percentage %
Correctly filled and returned	320	80
Not returned or incorrectly filled	80	20
Total	400	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 2: Responses of Sampled Women Entrepreneurship Development

Divisions	Administered Questionnaire	Retrieved Questionnaire	Percentage %
Ikorodu	80	68	21.25
Badagry	80	60	18.75
Ikeja	80	64	20
L/Island	80	64	20
Epe	80	64	20
Total	400	320	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 3: Bio-Data of Respondents

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage %
Educational Background	No Formal Schooling	5	1.6%
	Primary 6	1	0.3%
	S.S.C.E./G.C.E.	40	12.5%
	OND/NCE	148	46.3%
	BSC/HND	88	27.5%
	Postgraduate Deg/Dipl.	38	11.9%
	Total	320	100%
Marital Status	Single	231	72.19%
	Married	79	24.69%
	Divorced	4	1.25%
	Widowed	6	1.88%
	Total	320	100%
Age	20 -29	188	58.8%
	30 – 39	67	20.9%
	40 – 49	27	8.4%
	50 – 59	26	8.1%
	60 and Above	12	3.8%
	Total	320	100%
Years of Operation	1 - 5 years	166	51.9%
	6 - 10 years	60	18.8%
	11 - 15 years	22	6.9%
	16 - 20 years	26	8.1%
	21 and Above	46	14.4%
	Total	320	100%
Sources of Finance	Self-financing	278	86.9%
	Borrowing or Credit Sales	22	6.9%
	Banks Loan	9	2.8%
	Government Grant	11	3.4%
	Total	320	100%
Area of Specialization	Finance	23	7.2
	Management	30	9.4
	Accounting	40	12.5
	Audit	3	0.9
	Entrepreneurship	50	15.6
	Others	174	54.4
	Total	320	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Perception of respondents on Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements regarding entrepreneurship programme on a Likert scale. The results were presented in table 4. It is noteworthy that strongly agreed and agreed were added up if the majority of respondents picked the options. As shown in the table, majority 251(78%) agreed that sufficient information and knowledge of entrepreneurship programs are readily available. The respondents further agreed 279 (87%) that entrepreneurship support program enhances women entrepreneurship growth. In addition, majority 154 (80%) agreed that women can access and easily join entrepreneurship program of their choice. Majority 161 (81%) of the respondents also reported that entrepreneurship support program reduces the vulnerability of women inequality. Most (79%) of the respondents further agreed that policy inconsistency and bureaucracy hindered the growth of women entrepreneurship. Respondents also reported (79%) that entrepreneurship support funds help women SMEs acquire appropriate technology and expand their operation. The respondents further agreed (48%) that they have benefited from poverty alleviation program. Majority agreed (50%) that they are member of a cooperative society. Hence, in the aggregate, majority of the respondents' agreed that women entrepreneurship programme is a means of women entrepreneurship development.

Table 4: Descriptive results for Women Entrepreneurship Programmes

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Dev
	f	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%		
Sufficient information and knowledge of entrepreneurship programs are readily available	71	22%	180	56%	35	11%	28	9%	6	2%	3.88	0.91
Entrepreneurship support program enhances Women Entrepreneurship Growth	124	39%	155	48%	23	7%	11	3%	7	2%	4.18	0.87
Women can access and easily join entrepreneurship program of their choice	101	32%	153	48%	34	11%	27	8%	5	2%	3.99	0.95
Entrepreneurship support program reduce the vulnerability of women inequality	106	33%	155	48%	32	10%	23	7%	4	1%	4.05	0.91
Policy inconsistency and bureaucracy hindered the growth of women entrepreneurship	99	31%	155	48%	40	13%	17	5%	9	3%	3.99	0.95
Entrepreneurship support funds help women SMEs acquire appropriate technology and expand their operation	88	28%	162	51%	43	13%	23	7%	4	1%	3.96	0.9
I have benefited from poverty alleviation program	52	16%	101	32%	61	19%	52	16%	54	17%	3.14	1.34
I am a member of a cooperative society	55	17%	106	33%	74	23%	40	13%	45	14%	3.27	1.28

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Women Income Earned

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements regarding income earned on a Likert scale. The results were presented in Table 5. It is noteworthy that strongly agreed and agreed were added up if the majority of respondents picked the options. As shown in the table majority of the respondents (74%) agreed that the needs within the nuclear family are easily met. In addition, majority (66%) agreed that there is no delay in payment of bills owed by family members. The respondents (68%) further agreed that they make sufficient contributions to family overall income. Majority of the respondents (83%) agreed that they support children education. In addition, majority (69%) agreed that lack of retained earnings eroded revenue (profits). Therefore, in aggregate, majority of the respondents' agreed that income earned is a means to women entrepreneurship development.

Table 5: Descriptive results for income earned

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Dev
	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
The need within the nuclear family are easily met	79	25%	158	49%	44	14%	30	9%	9	3%	3.84	0.99
There is no delay in payment of bills owed by family members	56	18%	154	48%	50	16%	43	13%	17	5%	3.59	1.09
I make sufficient contributions to family overall income	81	25%	137	43%	61	19%	28	9%	13	4%	3.77	1.05
Children education can be supported	100	31%	165	52%	42	13%	9	3%	4	1%	4.09	0.81
Lack of retained earnings eroded revenue(profits)	68	21%	154	48%	68	21%	21	7%	9	3%	3.78	0.95

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Poverty Alleviation programme

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements regarding poverty alleviation on a Likert scale. The results were presented in table 6. It is noteworthy that strongly agreed and agreed were added up if the majority of respondents picked the options. As shown in the table majority of the respondents (76%) agreed that they were able to repay borrowed loans. Respondents also agreed (84%) that they could afford good clothing. In addition, majority (62%) agreed that they were able to generate employment for people. The respondents further agreed (72%) that they could afford quality education for their children. Majority of the respondents (78%) agreed that they lived in a good accommodation. Respondents also agreed (78%) that they enjoyed good and quality meals daily. In addition, majority (62%) agreed that they could afford good health care. Majority of the respondents (73%) agreed that they were able to support their selves and their families. The respondents further (71%) agreed that they were self-dependent because of the business they do. Therefore, in aggregate, majority of the respondents' agreed that they were able to alleviate their poverty level.

Table 6: Descriptive results for Poverty Alleviation Programme

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std. Dev
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
I am able to repay borrowed loans	112	35%	130	41%	50	16%	20	6%	8	3%	3.99	0.99
I can afford good clothing	116	36%	154	48%	28	9%	17	5%	5	2%	4.12	0.89
I am able to generate employment for people	54	17%	143	45%	83	26%	22	7%	18	6%	3.6	1.03
I can afford quality education for my children	112	35%	118	37%	59	18%	24	8%	7	2%	3.95	1.01
I live in a good accommodation	88	28%	159	50%	44	14%	24	8%	5	2%	3.94	0.92
I enjoy good and quality meals daily	90	28%	155	48%	49	15%	25	8%	1	0%	3.96	0.88
I can afford good health care	79	25%	154	48%	52	16%	27	8%	8	3%	3.84	0.97
I am able to support myself and the family	82	26%	150	47%	47	15%	32	10%	9	3%	3.83	1.01
I am self-dependent because of the business I do	93	29%	133	42%	47	15%	28	9%	19	6%	3.79	1.13

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Regression Analysis

The statistical tool employed in this thesis is multiple regression analysis. However, before embarking on carrying out regression tests, it was important to do some diagnostic tests. This is aimed at ascertaining that the models specified in the study were accurately estimated and to further ensure that some assumptions of multiple linear regressions were complied with. Hence, normality, linearity and multicollinearity were carried out. The results of these preliminary tests are presented below.

Normality Tests

The test is carried out to ensure that the variables used in this study were normally distributed. Hence, skewness and kurtosis were used to test for normality. The results of the normality test of variables are presented in table 7. The table is a display of normality tests using skewness and kurtosis. The value are: women entrepreneurship programme (skewness -0.169, kurtosis - 0.028); women income earned (skewness - 0.410, kurtosis 0.301), women business features (skewness - 0.571, kurtosis 0.608); poverty alleviation (skewness -0.576, kurtosis 0.209); economic factors (skewness -0.123, kurtosis -0.566); social factors (skewness -0.012, kurtosis - 0.279). This indicated that all the variables of the study are normally distributed; hence, further tests could be carried out on the data.

Table 7: Normality Test Results

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Skewness		Kurtosis		Conclusion
	Statisti c	Statisti c	Statisti c	Std. Error	Statisti c	Std. Error	
Women Entrepreneurship Programme	320	3.9656	-.169	.136	-.028	.272	Normally distributed
Women Income Earned	320	3.9106	-.410	.136	.301	.272	Normally distributed
Women Business Features	320	4.0786	-.571	.136	.608	.272	Normally distributed
Poverty Alleviation	320	3.9753	-.576	.136	.209	.272	Normally distributed
Economic Factors	320	3.6406	-.123	.136	-.566	.272	Normally distributed
Social Factors	320	3.7419	-.012	.136	-.279	.272	Normally distributed
Valid N (listwise)	320						

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Linearity Tests

In order to fulfill the linearity assumption, the linear relationships of the independent variables on the dependent variables were tested using Pearson Correlation. The result is presented in table 8. As presented in the tables, there is positive and significant relationship between all the three measures of women entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation.

Table 8: Linearity Test Results

Correlations					
Variables		WEP	WBF	WIE	Conclusion
WEP	Pearson Correlation	1	.580**	.446**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	Linear
	N	320	320	320	
WIE	Pearson Correlation	.446**	.607**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		Linear
	N	320	320	320	
WBF	Pearson Correlation	.580**	1	.607**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	Linear
	N	320	320	320	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Multicollinearity Tests

The need for multicollinearity arises when two or more independent variables are highly correlated with each other. Since it has been confirmed in the table 8 that there is correlation among independent variables, the data was subjected to multicollinearity test. To do this test, tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis were employed as shown in the table 9. According to the table, VIF for women entrepreneurship programme is 1.63; women income earned is 2.049; women business features is 1.985, economic factors is 2.186 and social factors is 1.966. Furthermore, the table revealed that the tolerance range was between 0.488 and 0.614. Hence, this result indicated that there are no multicollinearity problems for the variables. Therefore, all the variables are certified good for the model and can be used for regression analysis.

Table 9: Multicollinearity Test Results

Coefficients^a			
Variables		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Women Entrepreneurship Programme	0.614	1.630
	Women Income Earned	0.488	2.049
	Women Business Features	0.504	1.985

a. Dependent Variable: Poverty Alleviation

Test of Hypotheses one

Based on results presented in table 10 it can be seen from the model summary that the adjusted R-squared of 0.647 indicate that 65% of the variation in poverty alleviation can be explained by women entrepreneurship programme. Other factors not included in the model accounts for 35%. This implied that there is a significant relationship between women entrepreneurship programme and poverty alleviation. The regression coefficients indicated the effect of women entrepreneurship programme on poverty alleviation. The result showed that there is positive and significant effect of women entrepreneurship programme on poverty alleviation (Beta 0.499,

$t=10.274$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$). The implication of this result is that a unit change in women entrepreneurship programme increased the chance of poverty alleviation by 65%. This finding can be said to be similar to the study performed by Adofu and Ocheja (2013) in Kogi state, Nigeria. Comparing their result they obtained via questionnaire, similarities can be seen in the percentage of the results in both studies. Hence, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship programmes helps in poverty alleviation.

Table 10: Regression Results for Women Entrepreneurship Programme

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.899 ^a	.652	.647	.341

a. Predictors: (Constant), WEP

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.574	1	32.574	105.558	.000 ^b
	Residual	98.132	318	.309		
	Total	130.707	319			

a. Dependent Variable: PA

b. Predictors: (Constant), WEP

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	1.632	.230		7.092	.000
	WEP	.591	.058	.309	10.274	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PA

Test of Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis sought to establish relationship between women entrepreneurs' earned income and poverty alleviation in Lagos State. The results were presented in table 11. The adjusted R-squared of 0.671 indicate that 67% of the variation in poverty alleviation can be explained by women income earned. Other factors not included in the model accounts for 33%. This implied that there is a significant relationship between women income earned and poverty alleviation. The regression coefficients indicated the effect of women income earned on poverty alleviation. The result showed that there is positive and significant effect of women income earned on poverty alleviation (Beta 0.594, $t=13.182$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$). The implication of this is that a unit change in women income earned increased the chance of poverty alleviation by 59.4%. The result also indicated that women participation in entrepreneurship business brought about an increase in their income earned, which in turn play a major role in poverty alleviation. This finding is consistent with the research performed by Misango and Ongiti (2013) on women entrepreneurs.

Table 11: Regression Results for Women Income Earned**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.894 ^a	.673	.671	.315.55

a. Predictors: (Constant), WIE

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46.185	1	46.185	173.762	.000 ^b
	Residual	84.522	318	.266		
	Total	130.707	319			

a. Dependent Variable: Poverty Alleviation (PA)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Women Income Earned (WIE)

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.483	.191		7.756	.000
	WIE	.637	.048	.594	13.182	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PA

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concluded that women's participation in entrepreneurship development positively influences poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Further inadequate financial support from the government poses a major challenge for women entrepreneurs. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- The government should encourage women's entrepreneurial development, raise awareness of its existence, and make financial assistance more accessible by eliminating many of the complicated procedures associated with loans.
- Women in entrepreneurship should be fully informed about government financing programs targeted at women's entrepreneurship development in relation to poverty alleviation.

Contributions to Knowledge

This work contributes to the existing body of knowledge by unveiling the need to develop women in such a way that they will become agents of poverty alleviation. Additionally, it serves as a pathway or guide for the Lagos State government and other financial institutions in developing policy regarding women's entrepreneurship businesses and activities.

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