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# ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACTIVITIES IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

The study analyzed the cultural influence on women's entrepreneurship development in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria. This paper stem from a post-graduate thesis that was self-sponsored, all procedures performed were in accordance with ethical standard. The population of the study consists of one hundred and fifty-three (153) women's owned registered enterprises in the Metropolis. The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to select the sample as a cohort to accommodate and provide a fair representation of different strata in the population. Thus, one hundred and fifty-three owners of enterprises were administered questionnaires, of which 101 were completed and retrieved. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings reveal that culture has a significant influence on women's entrepreneurship activities in the study area, and some cultural barriers deter women from exploiting their entrepreneurial potential. The study recommends that the government implement policies aimed at reducing cultural influence on women's enterprise activities, thereby providing an enabling environment that supports women's involvement in entrepreneurship activities in the area. Similarly, support from husbands/guardians of women through financial and moral motivations encourages them to engage in business ventures.

## KEYWORDS:

Women, Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, Culture, Influence.



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## Introduction

Women play a crucial role in every nation's economic activities and provide economic support to their respective families. In Nigeria, women's involvement in agricultural activities before the oil boom of the early 1970s contributed to their economic well-being as well as that of the country at large (Edozien, 2008). However, the discovery of oil and the subsequent neglect of agricultural activities which hitherto was dominated by women (in the Southern part of the country) led to mass unemployment and subsequent food shortage. This was because the production of crude oil and its allied services led to the demand for professionals and skilled labor in the oil industry, and due to the low educational level of most women in the country as at then, they could not secure jobs in the sector, and so they became redundant (Adepelumi, 2007).

Although, women's entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important source of economic fortune in many countries, their potential has not yet been optimized particularly in Northern Nigeria. Woman entrepreneurs experience gender-based biased and continue to face some challenges as a result of cultural practices/beliefs which situate them as subordinate to their male counterparts. Many women in Africa operate in environments where socio-cultural traditions play a large role in determining who becomes an entrepreneur. Socio-cultural conditions in some parts of the country hinder women from starting and running their businesses, as traditional women's roles are still highly regarded (Woldie&Adersua, 2004).

The position of women towards entrepreneurship activities can be regarded as traditional, which affects women's initiation into business in the area. While women's experiences can be more or less similar in Nigeria and Western countries, women entrepreneurs in Sokoto Metropolis face unique societal issues. Consequently, it is important to explore the nature of women's entrepreneurship within the area.

Studies have shown that women engage in entrepreneurship activities partly because of low levels of employment and the need to evade socio-cultural practice which prevent them from working in the public sector. Entrepreneurial activities make women more independent and allow them to effectively balance their roles as wives and mothers (Woldie&Adersua, 2004). In the contemporary period, women's contribution is said to span across various economic spheres, extending to the wider process of social transformation (Welter & Smallbone, 2006). Women own and operate around one-third of all businesses in the formal sector, and they represent the majority of businesses in the informal sector, (Bardasi, Blackden& Guzman, 2007; Aderemi, Ilori, Siyanbola, Adegbite & Aberejio, 2008).

Previous studies concentrated efforts on the importance of women's entrepreneurship, gender issues in entrepreneurship, and the contribution of women's entrepreneurship to economic growth and development (Suleiman & Muktar, 2004). However, the impact of culture on women's entrepreneurship has not been given considerate attention especially as it affects women in Sokoto Metropolis, being a part of Nigeria. While most women are allowed to carry out various business activities in other parts of the country (Southern) the story is not the same in the north, particularly in Sokoto State. It is on this basis that, this paper attempts to analyzed the influence of cultural practices on the development of women entrepreneurship activities in Sokoto Metropolis and to suggest ways to reduce the impact of such cultural practices.

## Literature Review

The concept of culture can be viewed in two dimensions: first, at the psychological level which focuses on the internalized norms, attitudes, and behavior of individuals from a particular culture, and, second, at the institutional level which focuses on the culture embodied in institutions such as; government, education, economic institutions, and business firms. In developing countries, societal structures have facilitated the transmission of conservative socio-cultural values and fueled in part socio-inhibitions through traditions surrounded by policy, legal environment, and institutional support mechanisms (Machine, 2009). For example, in some parts of Africa, the male child is preferred over the female child. The female is groomed for early marital roles, while the male child is sent to school to be educated. It is often preferred to educate the male child since they are seen as the economic protector or breadwinner for the immediate and extended family (Ndemo& Maina, 2007).

Furthermore, Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004), argue that entrepreneurship involves an application of energy and passion towards the creation of an enterprise which includes the willingness to take calculative risks; teamwork, the ability to manage needed resources, capacity to build solid business plans and most of all, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion. Achieving all these would require some form of formal education. Consistent with this, Kuratko (2005) posits that entrepreneurship needs to be taught by an expert to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge.

Generally, women are faced with a lot of constraints in the course of establishing and sustaining an enterprise. Studies have shown that problems such as; lack of experience, poor capital base, poor educational background, risk perception, gender discrimination, etc. have been identified. These problems are universal and similarly confronted by female entrepreneurs in different parts of the world (Gupta, Turban, Wasti & Sikdar, 2005), but the degree varies from place to place. In one such study, Yusuf (2013) assessed the Influence of gender and cultural beliefs on women entrepreneurs in developing countries with particular reference to Malaysia, the study attempted to link gender bias and sub-culture like regional, ethnic and religious practices within the context of national culture that affect women entrepreneurs in developing countries. The findings indicated that gender, ethnicity, and religion play important roles in entrepreneurship development and how women entrepreneurs are perceived and valued.

Similarly, Otunaiya, Ambali, and Idowu (2013) examined the constraints limiting the success of women entrepreneurs in 3 selected local government areas of Lagos State. Using a sample of 120 women entrepreneurs, data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, constraints analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The findings showed found that poor shop location was the first major constraint faced by women entrepreneurship in Lagos State and lack of long-term finance was ranked second, while competition from rivals was ranked third.

In the same vein, Urbano, Jimenez, and Noguera (2014) analyzed the sociocultural factors that influence the likelihood of women becoming entrepreneurs, using institutional factors. Binary logistic regression was applied as the statistical method of analysis, using data from 40 countries and 56, 875 respondents (from the World Value Survey (WVS) and the World Bank (WB)). The findings of the study reaffirm the relevance of socio-cultural factors to social entrepreneurship. Particularly, that altruistic attitudes and being a member of a social organization are the most relevant socio-cultural factors for female entrepreneurship. Moreover, Amodu and Audu (2015), examined the effects of gender bias and cultural beliefs on women entrepreneurship in Nigeria, using 380 women entrepreneurs in three states (Benue, Kogi, and Kwara), and the study adopted a descriptive survey design. The finding of the study shows that women in Nigeria are affected by many cultural factors that impede the growth and development of their entrepreneurial intentions.

Similarly, Mordi, Simpson, Singh, and Okafor (2014), in their study on the role of cultural values in understanding the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Nigeria, confirmed that female entrepreneurs in Nigeria enjoyed risk-taking; they value independence and autonomy, and see themselves as creative and innovative. The findings of the study further identified family responsibilities as the most important gender-based and family factor affecting Nigerian women entrepreneurs in the study areas. The study concluded that women entrepreneurs in Nigeria are not disadvantaged because of personal factors such as lack of mental, educational, or other kinds of abilities, but more as a result of gendered categorization and cultural norms.

Moreover, Aderinto, David, and Alabi, (2018), assess the effect of cultural values on the development of women in entrepreneurship in South Western Nigeria. The population of the study was the total number of women entrepreneurs in the six states of the South Western, Nigeria out of which three states of Oyo, Ogun, and Osun, and three local governments from each of the three states were randomly selected to give a sample size of 336. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents and 298 were duly filled and returned. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that there exists a low but positive correlation between cultural values and the development of women in small-scale enterprises. Furthermore, the Pearson correlation (R) value of 41.5% revealed that there is a correlation between cultural value and women's development in Small Scale Enterprises.

Also, Giwa and Babakatun (2019), examined the effect of sociocultural factors on women's entrepreneurship development in Kaduna state. Using a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 332 women entrepreneurs in Kaduna Metropolis and analyzed via correlation and regression analyses. The study found that there is a significant relationship between sociocultural factors and women entrepreneurship development in Kaduna Metropolis, indicating significant relationships between religion and women entrepreneurship. The study recommends that women entrepreneurs in Kaduna Metropolis should be proactive in doing business by bearing in mind various socio-cultural factors such as religion, culture and gender roles that may hinder the smooth running of their businesses.

### Theoretical Framework

The theory underpinning this study is liberal feminism. Liberal feminism discusses how sex and gender are intimately related to socialization. It sees women as disadvantaged relative to men due to overt discrimination and to systemic factors which deprive them of vital resources required for business and economic decisions such as; finance, education, and experience (Fisher, Reuber & Dyke, 1993). This theory works toward an egalitarian society that would uphold the right of each individual to fulfill their potential (Kutani & Bayraktaroglu, 2003). Liberal feminism advocates that social and economic reforms can only be possible if women are given the opportunities and status as their men counterparts to participate in economic developmental issues. As such, women in Kaduna Metropolis should enjoy relative opportunities as their male counterparts, to harness their entrepreneurship potential.

### Methodology

The paper employed a descriptive survey research design to carry out the study and the reason is that information needed to describe existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes, behavior, or values is obtained easily. The research is conducted in Sokoto Metropolis and is selected because of its historical background in Nigeria. The target population of this study is 153 women in small-scale enterprises that were registered by Cooperate Affairs Commission (CAC) in the study area and this was used as the sample size of the study. The study employed a combination of cluster and simple random sampling; the study area was clustered based on their geographical location and the enterprise they engaged in. Data was collected using a questionnaire because it allows the researcher to reach a large sample within a limited time and the questionnaire is designed on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed to all 153 enterprise owners as a cohort, out of which 101 questionnaires were properly filled and retrieved. Data generated for this study were analyzed through descriptive statistics in form of tables and percentages to describe the phenomenon associated with data.

### Results and Discussion

The data obtained from the respondents were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics. Data on the basic features of respondents, a cultural practice that affects women's enterprise activities, measures of mitigating the influence of cultural practice on women's enterprises, etc. were collected and analyzed.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age**

Age Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
20-29	22	21.8
30-39	34	33.7
40-49	39	38.6
50 above	6	5.9
Total	101	100

*Source:* Field Survey (2022)

Table 1 shows that twenty-two (22) respondents, representing 21.8% are between the age of 20-29, and thirty-four (34) respondents, representing 33.7% are between the age of 30-39. Thirty-nine (39) respondents, representing 38.6% are between the ages of 40-49. While six (6) respondents, representing 5.9% are from the age of 50 and above. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 40-49, followed by those within the age of 30 - 39. This finding is similar to that of Aderinto, David, and Alabi, (2018) who reported that the majority of women entrepreneurs are within their prime age of 26 – 35 years representing 35.2%. This implies that people who are involved in small enterprises are between the vibrant and active ages.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Single	23	22.8
Married	76	75.2
Divorced	1	1.0
Widow	1	1.0
Total	101	100

*Source:* Field Survey (2022)

Table 2 shows that seventy-six (76) respondents representing 75.2% are married, twenty-three (23) respondents, representing 22.8% are single, and one (1) respondent representing 1.0% is divorced. While one (1) respondent representing 1.0% is widowed. This indicates that the majority of the respondent is married. Thus, the majority of the married women in the study area engaged in one form of entrepreneurship activity or another.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification**

Academic qualifications	Frequency	Percent (%)
SSCE	57	56.43
NCE/OND	36	35.64
HND	07	06.93
Degree	04	03.96
Total	101	100

*Source:* Field Survey (2022)

Table 3 reveals the academic qualification of the respondents, where fifty-seven (57) respondents, representing 56.43% were O' Level Certificate holders, and thirty-six (36) respondents, representing 35.64% were NCE.OND holders, seven (7) respondents, representing 06.93% were holders of a High National Diploma. While four (4) respondents, representing 03.96% were degree holders. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are educated at O' Level, hence the need for them to engage in an enterprise as it will be difficult for them to secure a paid job. More so, fewer women in this part of the country engage in white-collar jobs.

**Table 4: Responses on the cultural practices that affect women's enterprise activities**

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Seclusion of women	42	41.58
Low educational level	10	9.90
Poor source of capital	10	9.90
Early Marriage	23	22.77
Dependency of women	16	15.84
Total	101	100

*Source:* Field survey (2022)

Table 4 shows the results of respondents' views on the type of cultural practice that influence women's enterprise activities in the study area. The finding shows that forty-two (42) respondents, representing 41.58% indicate that, the seclusion of women (both married and young ladies) into their matrimonial houses affects their participation in enterprise activities. Ten (10) respondents, representing 9.90% indicate that a low level of education (western) is responsible for the poor participation of women in enterprise activities in the study area. Ten (10) respondents, representing 9.90% show that a poor source of capital is the major reason why women's enterprise activities are low. Twenty-three (23) respondents, representing 22.77% indicate that early marriage is what affects women's enterprise activities. While, sixteen (16) respondents, representing 15.84% are of the view that, it is the dependent nature of women in the study area that contributes to poor women's enterprise activities. Going by this analysis, it could be deduced that culture has a significant influence on women's enterprise activities in the study area.

**Table 5: Responses on the influence of culture on women enterprise activities**

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Agree	68	67.3
Agree	10	9.9
Can't decide	0	0
Disagree	16	15.8
Strongly Disagree	7	6.9
Total	101	100

*Source:* Field survey (2022)

Table 5 presents the results of the respondents on whether culture has any influence on day-to-day activities. The finding shows that sixty-eight (68) respondents, representing 67.3% strongly agreed that culture influence their activities, ten (10) respondents, representing 9.9% agree, sixteen (16) respondents, representing 15.8% disagree that culture influences their day-to-day activities, and seven (07) respondents, representing 6.9% strongly disagree. This shows that culture influences a significant number of women entrepreneurs in the study area.

**Table 6: Response on whether the influence of culture on women's enterprise activities can be mitigated**

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	74	73.3
Agree	0	0
Can't decide	0	0
Disagree	9	8.9
Strongly disagree	18	17.8
Total	101	100

*Source:* Field survey (2022)

Table 6 presents the results of the respondents on whether cultural influence on women's enterprise activities can be mitigated in the study area. The findings show that seventy-four (74) respondents, representing 73.3% strongly agree that cultural influence among women entrepreneurs can be mitigated, nine (09) respondents, representing 8.9% disagreed especially looking at the deeply rooted cultural background of the study area, and eighteen (18) of the respondents, representing 17.8% strongly disagreed. This shows that cultural influence on women's entrepreneurial activities can be mitigated in the study area.

**Table 7: Response on ways of mitigating the influence of culture on women's enterprise activities**

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Social Mobilization	21	20.79
Preaching	14	13.68
Social security intervention	32	31.68
Access to affordable education	12	11.88
Establishment of skills acquisition centers for women	23	22.77
Total	101	100

*Source:* Field survey (2022)

Table 7 indicates the results of the respondents on ways of mitigating cultural influence on women's enterprise activities in the study area. The findings show that twenty-one (21) respondents, representing 20.79% are of the view that, social mobilization can be used to mitigate the influence of culture on women's enterprise activities in the study area. Fourteen (14) respondents, representing 13.68% show preaching is the best weapon mitigation, especially looking at the deeply rooted cultural background of the study area. Thirty-two (32) respondents, representing 31.68% indicate that social security intervention is best to measure looking that women suffer from a poor source of capital. Twelve (12) respondents, representing 11.88% show that access to affordable education can mitigate cultural influence on women's enterprise activities in the study area, this is because education is the basis for all development. Twenty-three (23) respondents, representing 22.77% are of the view that the establishment of skills acquisition centers for women across the study area is the best measure to mitigate



cultural influence on women's enterprise activities in the study area. This shows that cultural influence on women's entrepreneurial activities can be mitigated in the study area through a variety of ways.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigates the influence of cultural practice on the emergence and development of women's entrepreneurial activities in the Sokoto Metropolis. Findings from the study show that there existed many types of cultural practices that influence women's enterprise activities in the study area. The result shows that 41.58% indicates that, the seclusion of women (both married and young ladies) into their houses affects their participation in enterprise activities. About ten (9.90%) percent indicate that a low level of education (western) is responsible for the poor participation of women in enterprise activities in the study area. Moreover, 9.90% shows that a poor source of capital is the major reason why women's enterprise activities are low. Similarly, 22.77% indicate that early marriage is what affects women's enterprise activities. While, 15.84% are of the view that, it is the dependent nature of women in the study area that contributes to poor women's enterprise activities. Similarly, on whether cultural influence on women's enterprise activities can be mitigated in the study area. The findings show that 73.3% strongly agree that cultural influence among women entrepreneurs can be mitigated in the study area,

ON ways through which cultural influence on women's enterprise activities in the study area can be mitigated, the findings show that 20.79% of the respondents are of the view that, social mobilization can be used to mitigate the influence of culture on women's enterprise activities in the study area. Over 13.68% of respondents show preaching is a weapon of mitigation, especially looking at the deeply rooted religious background of the study area. Over 31.68% of the respondents indicate that social security intervention is the best measure looking at those women that suffer from a poor source of capital. About 11.88% shows that access to affordable education can mitigate cultural influence on women's enterprise activities in the study area; this is because education is the basis for all development. Similarly, 22.77% are of the view that the establishment of skills acquisition centers for women across the study area is an important measure to mitigate cultural influence on women's enterprise activities in the study area. Thus, the paper recommends the following additional measures to help address the problems faced by women's enterprise activities in the study area:

1. Governments (local, state, and federal) as the policymakers, should create an enabling environment that supports women's involvement in entrepreneurship participation
2. Cultural barriers which affect women's enterprise activities could further be mitigated through intensive enlightenment campaigns using women's groups, and traditional institutions; this will break cultural barriers hindering women's participation in entrepreneurial activities.
3. Finally, support from the husbands/guardians of women through motivations (financial/moral) will encourage them to engage in business ventures.



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