



WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL WORK SECTOR AND SUSTAINABILITY OPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Women remain concentrated in invisible areas of informal work, such as domestic labour and assistance in small family enterprises, which offer precarious employment status, low, irregular or no remuneration, little or no access to social security or protection and limited ability to organize to ensure the enforcement of ILO standards and human rights. Women working in the informal sector face casual or irregular employment with little or no social security benefits, falling outside the scope of protective labor legislation, predominance of sub-contracting jobs done for the protective sector, engaging women and children at lower wages than men, deplorable working conditions; often without basic amenities, very limited opportunities for skill up gradation or improved production techniques and little if any trade union participation or organization. They must also often contend with deficient infrastructure and a range of time and space constraints on their productivity. Socialist Feminist Theory guided the study, descriptive research design was adopted and quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical package for Social Sciences while the qualitative data was analyzed using Content analysis. Findings revealed that women in the informal work sector do not have easy access to credit facilities due to several factors such as demand for collateral, high interest rate charged in Banks, level of literacy and the number of lending institutions available. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between the sustainability options women derive in business and the totality of their experience the informal work sector. There is also a significant relationship between awareness of credit facilities and the ability to obtain credit from lending institutions.

Key words: *Informal work, Domestic labour, Collateral, Irregular Employment, Productivity*

INTRODUCTION

The term informal sector is the term used to represent the workers who do not have any protection of the labour laws. According to (Chen 2004), the workers who come under informal economy can be broadly classified as: Employers (owners of informal enterprises, owner operators of informal enterprises), Self-Employed (own- account workers; heads of family businesses; unpaid family workers), wage workers (employers of informal enterprises, casual workers without a fixed employer, home-based workers).

Women are over-represented in the informal sector worldwide. This basic fact has several dimensions, firstly; the informal sector is the primary source of employment for women in most developing countries. Existing data suggests that the majority of economically active women in developing countries are engaged in the informal sector. In some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, virtually all of the female non-agricultural labour force in the informal sector: for example, the informal sector accounts for over 95% of women workers outside agriculture in Benin, Chad and Mali. The Informal sector is a large source of employment for women than for men (UN; 2000). The proportion of women workers in the informal sector exceeds that of men in most countries.

Informal wage employment is composed of employees of informal enterprises as well as various types of informal wage workers who work for formal enterprises and households, or who have no fixed employer. These include casual day laborers, domestic workers, industrial workers (notably home-workers), undeclared workers and part-time or temporary workers without secure contracts, workers benefits or social protection (World Bank, 2000).



Informal work has not only persisted on an international scale since the 1970's but has also expanded and appeared in new guises in the context of globalization, neo-liberalism and cross border and rural-urban migration, all of which are highly gendered processes (Bach; 2003; ILO ;2007). While more women now participate than at any other time in history, labour markets across all geographical regions are sex-segregated with women concentrated in lower quality, irregular and informal employment (Valenzuela;2005).

As increasing global integration and competition has fuelled a race to the bottom in which multinational corporations may relocate numerous times in search of increasingly cheaper labour (Chen;2003), women in the informal economy find that they are the weakest links in the global value chains.

Statement of the Problem

Women remain concentrated in invisible areas of informal work, such as domestic labour and assistance in small family enterprises, which offer precarious employment status, low irregular or no remuneration, little or no access to social security or protection and limited ability to organize to ensure the enforcement of ILO standards and human rights (Chen; 2002). Poor women employed in the informal economy also face a number of serious health and safety risks; including dangerous working conditions, gendered violence and increased susceptibility to HIV/AIDS (Ambert et.al; 2007). They must also often contend with deficient infrastructure and a range of time and space constraints on their productivity.

In most developing countries, women are the most active players in the informal sector (Mbeche; 2002). As employment in formal sector becomes scarce, women engaging in entrepreneurship in the informal sector face many psycho-social challenges and their success in the business depends greatly on their ability to cope with these challenges. They are disproportionately grouped at the lower end of the scale, in subsistence self-employment and grossly under-represented at the entrepreneurship end of self-employment scale, where they experience greater problems than men in sustaining their own business.

Iyer (1991) offers the following characteristics of women working in the informal sector:

Casual or irregular employment with little or no social security benefits, falling outside the scope of protective labor legislation, predominance of sub-contracting jobs done for the protective sector, engaging women and children at lower wages than men, deplorable working conditions; often without basic amenities, very limited opportunities for skill up gradation or improved production techniques and little if any trade union participation or organization.

The growth of entrepreneurship results from certain environmental conditions and socio-economic and cultural inputs. Ironically, while it is clear that more and more women are coming forward to set up enterprises, the rates of growth of such enterprises are hindered by myriads of socio-cultural problems for any meaningful entrepreneurial development (Olutunla, 2007, Onyenechere, 2008, Aderemi, et al. 2008, Sulaiman, 2009). Several studies around the world have been carried out which throw light on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. There are problems faced by women and they are of different dimensions and magnitudes, owing to social and cultural reasons. These challenges may influence negatively the growth and continuity of their businesses if they do not have the wherewithal to cope with the situation.

Research Questions

1. What constraints do women in the informal work sector face?
2. What coping strategies do market women adopt in keeping their business?

Literature Review

Informal sector comprises all activities that fall outside the formal net of registered, taxed, licensed, statistically documented and appropriately zoned business enterprises (Thomas;



1988). The motivation behind most informal sector business is assumed to be personal survival, as opposed to return on investment.

According to World Bank(2003) ; women entrepreneurs are the engine of growth, essential for a competitive and efficient market, critical for poverty reduction and play a particularly important role in developing countries even though entrepreneurship has its own advantages, it is not free of barriers due to some factors.

Women in informal sector experience various problems while undertaking their activities. Certain barriers in the business environment have a disproportionate effect on women traders; for example, according to World Bank (2003), even though women entrepreneurs in informal sector contribute a lot for the economic development, they are affected by lack of entrepreneurial, managerial and marketing skills, difficulties accessing financial resources, competition of indigenous informal sector in foreign markets, discriminatory regulatory practices, inadequate intellectual property and cultural differences.

Constraints Women in the Informal Work Sector Face

The growth of entrepreneurship results from certain environmental conditions and socio-economic and cultural inputs. Ironically, while it is clear that more and more women are coming forward to set up enterprises, the rate of growth of such enterprises are hindered by myriads of socio- cultural problems for any meaningful entrepreneurial development (Olutunla, 2007; Aderemi, et al. 2008; Onyenechere, 2008; Sulaiman, 2009). Several studies around the world have been carried which throw light on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. There are problems faced by women and they are of different dimensions and magnitudes, owing to social and cultural reasons. These challenges may influence negatively the growth and continuity of their businesses if they do not have the wherewithal to cope with the situation.

Women entrepreneurs in the informal micro-businesses experience great difficulties in obtaining loans from financial institutions designated for small businesses such as development banks and local foundations. Many of them do not have the necessary collateral as they do not own land or property. Also, some do not and have never used the commercial banks and therefore do not have established credit ratings and for those who do use the banks, their level of savings is often too low to be used as security.

Abimbola, Emmanuel and Ahmadu (2007:10), found out that in Nigeria many programs and legislation have been implemented to improve life for women entrepreneurs, but have not yielded results. This happened because most of the facilities embedded in the programs do not reach those in need of them, but are used to service political officials and their relatives. These researchers believe that the dispensation of facilities should rather be done by community-based associations or groups, rather than through political affiliations. Effective monitoring mechanisms should also be put into place to ensure that facilities are put into proper use and to prevent the misapplication of funds.

Shelton (2006: 294) advised that in order to improve the survival and performance of women owned ventures, programs should be implemented to assist women in selecting appropriate work- family management strategies. If work- family conflict is addressed, a potential stumbling block for women business owners will be removed and the effectiveness of other programs will be enhanced.

Many small entrepreneurs are mistrustful of banks and prefer to borrow from local money lenders or relatives who can supply them with small amounts of quick and ready cash and with a great deal of more privacy. It must however be noted that few credit institutions which cater for and respond to the needs of these micro-enterprises adversely affects their scope, level of operation and their success or failure. For this reason the Peoples Bank of Nigeria was established to meet the financial needs of micro-enterprise traders but it is common knowledge that Structural Adjustment Program has been detrimental to the survival of many small scale entrepreneurs. The banks have worsened the situation by charging high



interests on loans to these people. Despite the above, the constraints facing women in the informal sector are:

Accessing Credit

Access to finance is a key issue for women entrepreneurs. Accessing credit, particularly for starting an enterprise, is one of the major constraints faced by women entrepreneurs. In many countries, women face unequal access to bank loans or discriminatory practice by banks. Women, in particular the less educated ones, find it difficult to get financing from banks because they lack information on how to go about securing a loan. According to Bammeke (2005) credit may be available for women through several schemes but there are bottlenecks and gaps and the multiplicity of schemes is often not adequately listed nor is there networking among agencies. As a result, clients approaching one institution are sometimes not made aware of the best option for their requirements. A general lack of experience and exposure restricts women from venturing out and dealing with banking institutions (United Nations, 2005).

Access to credit services by smallholders is normally seen as one of the constraints limiting their benefits from credit facilities. However, in most cases the access problem, especially among formal financial institutions, is one created by the institutions mainly through their lending policies. This is displayed in the form of prescribed minimum loan amounts, complicated application procedures and restrictions on credit for specific purposes (Schmidt and Kropp, 1987).

Credit Markets

Credit markets in Nigeria have mainly been characterized by the inability to satisfy the existing demand for credit in rural areas. However, whereas for the informal sector the main reason for this inability is the small size of the resources it controls, for the formal sector it is not an inadequate lending base that is the reason (Aryeetey, 1996b).

Rather, the reasons are difficulties in loan administration like screening and monitoring, high transaction costs, and the risk of default. Credit markets are characterized by information asymmetry, agency problems and poor contract enforcement mechanisms (Nissanke and Aryeetey, 1995). They are mainly fragmented because different segments serve clients with distinct characteristics. Because of this, lending units are unable to meet the needs of borrowers interested in certain types of credit. The result is a credit gap that captures those borrowers who cannot get what they want from the informal market, yet they cannot gain access to the formal sources. Enterprises that want to expand beyond the limits of self-finance but lack access to bank credit demand external finance, which the informal sector is unable to satisfy.

Business Financing

Business financing is a very important factor in growth and performance of businesses. Shepherd et al (2007) noted that one of the most difficult problems in new ventures especially small scale business is obtaining financing. Manasseh (2004) found out that financial institution such as banks offer finance to businesses which are mostly short term in nature. This is because the deposits made with them are demand deposits which cannot be lent on long term basis. Due to this fact the financing role of commercial banks is limited to short term loans exceeding four years. Short term loans range from three months to a maximum of four years and are given to established customers of the banks who have the necessary security. These are expensive as the customers will not have to only pay interest on them, but also the insurance of the security, Manasseh (2004).

In general, the growth and performance of business may be affected by its capital base. The capital depends on its balance between own sources and borrowed sources of capital or the amount attributable to credit. The portion of the capital structure that depends on credit is not



always to the small scale traders. These are some of the factors that affect the small scale traders' accessibility to credit facilities.

Interest Rate of Credit

The rate of interest charged on credit determines the cost of the credit. The cost credit is the amount of money the borrower is obligated to pay above the principal sum of money lent. Saleemi (2007) defined interest as the return on capital. Cost of credit can be classified as Gross Interest and Net Interest. Gross Interest implies the total amount that the debtor pays a creditor and the Net Interest is part of the interest that is for the use of capital only. The interest rate usually as a percentage of the borrowed amount determines the amount of interest over duration which may be a year. High interest rate therefore increases the cost of credit. High rate on credit may discourage small scale traders from borrowing reducing the accessibility of credit among them.

Every business needs financing, even though at first glance it might appear that funding is unnecessary. It is important that financing be as efficient as possible. Stutely (2003) argues that the borrower should be able to put the cost of all financing on the same basis, comparing them and come up with the one that gives the lowest cost financing option. Banks have often been criticized for having high interest rates charged on loans. But sometimes, there are factors beyond their control. The amount of interest rate charged is sometimes intertwined with the security of the loan, and the reason for which it is to be used or the nature of the business.

As a factor affecting accessibility of credit the interest rate charged on loans rank high. It also affects the rate of repayment of the loans lending to high rate of default on loans. Banks have been criticized for overcharging their clients by setting high interest rate.

Demand for Collateral by Financial Institutions

Most banking institutions demand collateral as one of the requirements for the access to credit facilities. This becomes a constraint to small scale enterprises most of who may not have deeds to capital assets to present as security against the loans. Furthermore, most lending institutions are more inclined to lending to the large scale businesses that have higher success rate and repayment rate .The small scale businesses are relegated to the microfinance institutions (MFI'S) and shylocks whose lending requirements may further discourage them.

For SMEs, among other factors, collateral is highlighted as one of the key elements of the business in this sector. Due to this as well as a verifiable credit history, most are therefore unable to access credit. The situation has led to the advert of micro credit in this sector where minimal collateral is required as a basis for granting loans.

Formal banking institutions always demand collateral to act as a security on loans. This is often in the form of houses or deed to some immovable assets. This precondition plays a major part in the accessibility of loans among the SMEs since majority of them cannot attain these requirements. The situation may be more complicated for women entrepreneurs who may not have right of ownership to expensive property including land and houses.

Beaver (2002), explains that the historical development and the associated culture of the banking system underpins the problem of the emphasis on the provision of collateral as a primary condition in lending. Banks have always adopted a risk adverse stance towards small firms, with an accompanying ability to focus on the income generating potential of the venture, when analyzing the likelihood of loan repayment. Therefore, although there has been a considerable progress in the lending to the SMEs, banks remain cautious because many of these businesses have no collateral or asset registers.

Literacy Level of Traders

Most lenders advertise their services on the print media. Since the literacy levels among the small scale traders are low they may not access the information. Others may have general



literacy but are not well informed on the effect of credit facilities on business growth and therefore be a constraining factor in the accessibility of credit among traders.(Tijani, 2011). Education and skills are needed to run a business. Literacy level is often reflected in ability to carry out managerial routines. The routine includes making decisions on financial investment and management. With low ability to read and write, therefore an entrepreneur is at a disadvantage in the loans market. Information on availability of loans and the rate of interest charged is communicated through newspapers in which a good level of literacy is required to read and interpret.

Due to low literacy levels, most traders are unable to differentiate the loan products offered by the financial institutions. Also since most of these services are offered in banking jargons, most traders are discouraged from applying for the loans. Further inadequacy in financial management skills and strategic planning put the traders in a disadvantaged position in competing with large firms which are run by well-educated professional managers.(Okpukpara, 2005).

The Number of Lending Institutions

The numbers of small scale traders are many while the financial institutions with the services tailored to them are few. The loan requirements of the traders are different from those of the large businesses. This is due to fragile nature of the business among other considerations such as size, management structure, the capital base etc. Therefore there is need to have many lending institutions whose lending policies are established with such factors in consideration. The few institutions with such considerations are faced by the many small scale traders whose financial demands they may not cater for. This reduces accessibility for those who cannot get credit.

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL WORK SECTOR

Informal Lending

The nature of the activities that market women are facing entails the danger of a loss of capital. Market women are affected by risk both at an individual and an aggregate level, while risk can have low and high impact on their businesses. Risk that occurs at an individual level can be prevented, in contrast to risk affecting all market women. A loss of capital or of labor is the worst-case scenario for market women, having a high impact on their businesses. A loss of capital can occur as a result of shocks in trade, such as theft or confiscation of goods, or high expenses in the household, such as costs for medication and school fees. Illness of a market woman or her household members may cause a shortage of labor. Risks that are low in impact include the failure to collect payments for goods that market women sell on credit to their customers, the failure to recover money lent to kinsmen, and the breakdown of the relationship to a wholesaler who provides a market woman with goods on credit. Examples for aggregate risk are the shutting down of Central Markets by local authorities due to sanitary issues, the imposition of taxes on traders, and a loss of money due to failed applications for group credit programs.(Daza, 2005).

The Role of Trade Association

Women entrepreneurs often come together in forming association in order to benefit, maintain and ensure continuity of economic transactions. To support many of the women informal enterprises, women usually established informal financial networks to provide a surprisingly wide range of financial services that is not available from the formal financial sector due to variety of legal and cultural barriers. The assistance of women trade associations cover a wide spectrum of activities encompassing credit, business skills training, technical and technology training, employment creation, marketing services, legal assistance, psychological counseling and some social welfare programs.



Business opportunity (2004) in Canada reported that women entrepreneurs often face a disproportionately challenging set of obstacles such as access to timely and sufficient capital for business development. In order to remove these obstacles and generate better opportunities for private sector opportunities among women, the associations usually make funds available for women. The fund was normally given out with flexible lending criteria such as; lack of collateral and lack of equity. The fund greatly helped improving access of women entrepreneurs to financing for business start-up and expansion.

Marcellina et al (2002) stated that in Ethiopia, association of women entrepreneurs is relatively a new phenomenon. Those in existence are mainly young organizations and they appear not to be very strong and do not meet the full range of needs of women entrepreneurs. Membership levels are few, as some of the women do not feel that there would be any real benefits from joining.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory adopted for this study is Socialist feminism, which is a branch of feminism that focuses upon both the public and private spheres of a woman's life and argues that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression. This is a two-pronged theory that broadens Marxist feminism's argument for the role of capitalism in the oppression of women and radical feminism's theory of the role of gender and patriarchy.

Socialist feminist's reject radical feminism's main claim that patriarchy is the only or primary source of oppression of women. Rather socialist feminists assert that women are unable to be free due to their financial dependence on males in the society. Women are subjects to the male rulers in capitalism in the oppression of women. Rather socialist feminists assert that women are unable to be free due to their capitalism due to an uneven balance in wealth. They see economic dependence as the driving force of women's subjugation to men. Further, socialist feminists see women liberation as a necessary part of larger quest for social, economic and political justice.

Socialist feminism draws upon many concepts found in Marxism such as a historical materialist point of view, which means that they relate their ideas to the material and historical gendered division of labour of each historical era is determined by the economic system of the time. These conditions are largely expressed through capitalist and patriarchal relations. Socialist feminists, thus reject the Marxist notion that class and class struggle are the only defining aspects of history and economic development. According to them, this view of gender oppression as a sub-class of class oppression is naïve and much of the work of socialist feminists has gone towards specifying how gender and class work together to create distinct forms of oppression and privilege for women and men of each class. Socialist feminism holds both economic and gender/sex factors equally responsible for the differential treatment women and men receive in the society. Applied to this study, women in the informal work sector face challenges in their business because of their dependence on men for financial sustainability. This hinders them from doing well in business and even securing access to financial services because it is believed they are not self-sustaining.

The literature review had its basis on the general introduction of what the informal sector is, constraints women in the informal sector face such as inadequate access to credit, interest rate charged on credit, demand for collateral by financial institutions, literacy level of traders and number of lending institutions as well as the coping strategies adopted by women in the informal work sector. The theory adopted in this study which is the Socialist Feminist theory enables women to compete favorably in the labour market. Thus, discrimination and other constraints faced by women in the informal work sector would be reduced.

METHODOLOGY



The methodology of this study was discussed under the following sections: Research design, study location and population, sample size and sample techniques, research instrument, sampling procedure, method of data analysis and ethical consideration and field experiences.

The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey design. Survey is a research method that researchers use to get information about certain groups of people of interest to them. This was used to compare participants' demographic variables in relation to their accessibility to credit facilities. In-depth interview, focus group discussion and self-administered questionnaire were used in getting the necessary information.

The sample size adopted for this study was 300 respondents which comprised 60 market women from different trades (categorized as clothes & accessories, shoes, kitchen utensils, school wears and other trades not mentioned) and the sample technique adopted was Stratified and Systematic sampling technique. With the stratified random sample, the population was divided into strata that the researcher considered important for inclusion in the study and then a sample was selected from each stratum using the systematic sampling technique. With stratified random sampling, Agbeni market women were divided into 5 strata's based on the goods they sold and importance when included in the study and a sample was then selected from each stratum using the simple random technique.

The researcher used questionnaire in order to get the opinions of respondents so also, in-depth interview and focus group discussion in order to get deeper insights into problems faced by women in the informal work sector. The questionnaires were administered to 300 respondents and consisted of five sections: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents, factors that prompt women into small-scale business, credit facilities available to Agbeni market women, constraints encountered in accessing credit facilities, coping strategies adopted by market women.

The focus group discussion were conducted with 3 market leaders, 3 market heads, 3 long standing women in the business and 3 women selling different types of goods. These 12 respondents were selected from the 300 respondents based on their long standing experience in the business. The in-depth interview was conducted randomly with 6 respondents from different trades. The in-depth interview and focus group discussion gave room for flexibility as well as the opportunity to probe deeper on some aspects relating to the study which the questionnaire could not cover fully.

Qualitative techniques of data analysis were employed to accomplish the descriptive analysis while the quantitative technique was employed to accomplish the inferential analysis. The quantitative data were obtained from responses generated from the questionnaire instruments while the qualitative data emerged from responses collected through the in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

CONSTRAINTS ENCOUNTERED IN ACCESSING CREDIT FACILITIES

Frequency distribution of respondents by accessibility to credit facilities

Respondents who had access to credit facilities were (45.0%) while respondents who did not have easy access to credit facilities were (55.0%). Majority of the respondents did not have easy access to credit facilities and this was due to several factors such as the demand for collateral, high interest rate charged in banks, level of literacy and the number of lending institutions available. To buttress this point, similar opinions were gotten from respondents and summarized thus:

"I am aware of several credit facilities such as Banks, Cooperative society, Microfinance but the problem encountered is that despite the existence of these credit facilities, only few are easy to access by small scale traders". FGD/Female/Shoe seller/10th June 2012.

It was observed also that the respondents who encountered constraint in accessing loans from Banks due to high interest rate charged were (76.0%) while those who did not encounter constraints accessing loans from banks and did not feel high interest rate charged



by banks was inconveniencing were(24.0%) . Majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the high interest rate charged in bank (76.0%) and this finding supports literature. Stutely (2003) argued that most borrowers compare costs of financing their business and come up with the one that gives the lowest cost financing option and therefore Banks are usually not options for small scale traders in accessing credit facilities .To buttress this point a respondent stated:

"Banks are not encouraging at all; they don't operate in the interest of small scale traders because the interest charged on loans is usually too high and as I am struggling to sustain my business by borrowing loans, I cannot be paying high interest again". (IDI/Female/kitchen utensils seller/5th June 2012).

Furthermore, a 50 year old respondent stated that:

"Due to the high interest rate charged in banks when business is not moving like this period, it is hard for us to return loan borrowed let alone the interest on it and this has implications on us because whatever we use as collateral will be collected by the banks". (FGD/Female/Cloth seller/10th June 2012).

It was observed that respondents who indicated that their literacy level affected their access to credit facilities were (55.0%) while those who felt their level of literacy had nothing to do with accessing credit facilities were (45.0%). Majority of the respondents believed their literacy level affected their access to credit facilities (45.0%); this finding supports literature. Coleman (2007:315) argued that lack of education of women entrepreneurs hindered them from accessing credit facilities. Due to low literacy levels, most traders are unable to differentiate loan products offered by financial institutions. To buttress this point, a 60 year old respondent stated that:

"I believe my level of literacy affects my access to credit facilities. I only have secondary school education and I believe I will be cheated when I borrow loans for my business because I will not be able to verify the interest rate charged". (IDI/Female/Cloth seller/7th June 2012).

It was observed that the respondents who believed demand for collateral in banks hindered them from accessing credit facilities were (78.0%) while those who believed demand for collateral did not affect their access to credit facilities were (22.0%). Majority of the respondents saw the demand for collateral as a problem in accessing credit facilities (78.0%) and this finding supports literature. Beaver (2002) explained that the historical development and the associated culture of the banking system underpin the problem of the emphasis on the provision of collateral as a primary condition in lending. He stated further that lack of collateral is highlighted as a crucial feature in obtaining credit and therefore most small scale traders are unable to access credit.

To buttress this point, a respondent indicated that demand for collateral hindered their access to credit facility. In her statement she said:

"Demand for collateral in banks has hindered me from getting loans, this is because I do not have any house, land or even car that can be used as collateral and therefore I do not have access to credit from banks". (IDI/Female/Bag seller/7th June 2012).

It was observed from the table that respondents who believed the number of lending institutions gave them access to credit facilities were (22.0%) while those who believed the number of lending institutions did not give them access to credit facilities were(78.0%) . Majority of the respondents believed the number of lending institutions did not affect their access to credit (78.0%). Bamisile(2006) argued that the microfinance institutions have not been able to adequately address the gaps in terms of credit services required by small scale traders. A respondent had this to say contrary to the belief that many lending institutions are needed, she stated thus:

"It is not the number of lending institutions that matter but how effective they are in granting credit facilities to small-scale traders, the lending institutions presently should try and be more effective in helping small scale traders' access credit facilities easily". (FGD/Female/School wears seller/10th June 2012).



It was observed from the table that the respondents who suffered low patronage were (55.0%) while those who did not suffer low patronage in their business were (45.0%). Low patronage was attributed to several factors based on business engaged in. Some respondents attributed low patronage to competition in the sense that several women sold the same kind of goods and therefore they had to share the same customers, some attributed low patronage to fluctuations in the business, they said there are seasons when they made good sales such as festive seasons.

Majority of the respondents attributed low patronage also to irregularities in the payment of workers salary in Oyo state, they stated that if workers were paid their salaries promptly, they would patronize them and business will move. The implication of low patronage on small scale traders is the fact that since profit was not made they were unable to have access to credit facilities because even the informal sources of accessing credit facilities required that a deposit was made before they were given credit for their business.

Perceived ways of overcoming challenges in their business

Majority of the respondents indicated that they needed government's support to overcome challenges in their business (69.7%), those who said workers salary in the formal sector should be paid so that they would patronize them were (17.0%) , those who said that advice from those who had been in business longer than them is needed to overcome challenges in business were (2.3%) while those who indicated that capital is needed to them to overcome challenges faced in business were(10.3%) . Majority of the respondents indicated that they required government support (69.7%). This finding supports literature. Abimbola, Emmanuel and Ahmadu (2007:1101) argued that government should implement programs to improve the lives of women entrepreneurs.

The reason for inclusion of this question is to find out from respondents how the constraints encountered in accessing credit facilities could be overcome. To buttress this point, a respondent stated that:

"To overcome challenges in accessing credit, government support and intervention is paramount. Small scale traders need the support of government in accessing credit; there should be a scheme in which we can easily borrow money without much interest rate. The names of traders should be collected and our market leaders should be given the money to give us and we will pay when we make profit in our business". (FGD/Female/Soft Drink seller/10th June 2012).

COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY MARKET WOMEN

Coping strategies adopted by Respondents

It was observed that respondents who had encouragement from their husbands were (75.7%) while those who did not receive encouragement from their husbands were (24.3%). More respondents received encouragement from their husbands because they were able to balance work with the family. Respondents who received continuous support from cooperative societies were (42.0%) while those who did not receive continuous support from cooperative societies were (58.0%). More respondents received continuous support from cooperative societies because stringent requirements were not demanded from them.

Respondents who were encouraged by plough back of profit in business were (77.7%) while those who were not encouraged by plough back of profit were (23.0%). Respondents who were encouraged by the plough back of profit were (77.7%) which constitutes majority of the respondents, although this profit was not made every day as there were fluctuations in business but this was the overall assessment of profit made in the business over the years. Respondents who received support from traders association were (56.3%) while those who did not receive support from traders association were (43.7%). Majority of the respondents received support from trade association, this was due to the fact that women entrepreneurs in the initial stage often came together in forming association in order to benefit maintain and ensure continuity of economic transactions.

To buttress this point, a respondent stated:



“The traders association helps us in protecting our business. Other reasons stated are: It improves our standard of living, helps us develop our sense of identity and helps us fight for public recognition of the values of informal sector and to influence the government policy and decisions that may affect us or our trades”. Finally, it helps us in disaster management, recovery of loss of our goods when there is fire outbreak or our goods are stolen”. (IDI/Female/Market Leader/6th June 2012).

This finding supports literature; Business opportunity (2004) in Canada argued that women entrepreneurs often face a disproportionately challenging set of obstacles such as access to timely and sufficient capital for business development. In order to remove these obstacles, associations are formed which usually support women. Weber’s social action theory supports this finding; he argued that action is based on unconditional intrinsic value, whether ethical or aesthetic. In other words, action is based on collective beliefs, values and sanctions. Therefore market women derive benefits from collective actions taken in traders association.

Sustainability Options

It was observed that the respondents who found desire for economic independence as a major factor which keeps them going in the business were (40.3%). This finding supports literature. Bradely and Boles (2003:12) argued that women are mainly in business due to the desire to be economically independent. Those who found the need to support the family as a factor which keeps them going in the business were (49.3%). This finding supports literature; Segal et.al (2005:3) confirmed the fact that women engaged in business to supplement the family’s income and also support their husbands. Those who found the responsibility of being the breadwinner as a major factor for keeping the business were (5.7%) while those who had other factors which served as a major factor for keeping the business were (4.7%).

Cross-Tabulations

Table 1: Cross Tabulation of Sustainability Options in business

What keeps one going in business	Totality of Experience in Business				Total
	Good business	Economic freedom	Flexibility of time	I have achieved a lot	
Encouragement from husband	67(55.4%)	2(1.7%)	1(0.8%)	9(7.4%)	121(100%)
Continuous support from cooperative	87(58.8%)	5(3.4%)	4(2.7%)	12(8.1%)	148(100%)
Plough back of profit	11(64.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(17.6%)	17(100%)
Support from traders association	0(0%)	2(14.3%)	1(7.1%)	5(35.7%)	14(100%)

$\chi^2 c = 118.905, P = *0.000$

Table 1 presents data on cross tabulation of what keeps one going in business and totality of experience in business. The table revealed that 55.4% of those who received encouragement from their husband believed their business is a good one, 1.7% believed they derived economic freedom from the business, 0.8% indicated that there was flexibility in the business while 7.4% indicated they had achieved a lot in the business. Among respondents who received continuous support from cooperative society, 58.8% believed it is a good business, 3.4% derived economic freedom from the business, 2.7% indicated that there was flexibility of time in the business while 8.1% indicated that they had achieved a lot in the business. Among respondents who were encouraged by plough back of profit in the business, 64.7% believed the business is a good one, 11.8% indicated that the business afforded them flexibility of time while 17.6% indicated they had achieved a lot in the business. Among respondents who received continuous support from traders association,

14.3% derived economic freedom from the business while 37.5% indicated they had achieved a lot in the business.

Table 2: Perceived ways of overcoming challenges in business

Overcome Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Government's support	209	69.7
Payment of workers salary	51	17.0
Advice from those in business	7	2.3
More capital	31	10.3
Missing value	2	0.7
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey (2012)

Table 2 above presents data on perceived ways of overcoming challenges in business. It was observed from the table that majority of the respondents indicated that they needed government's support to overcome challenges in their business(69.7%), those who said workers salary in the formal sector should be paid so that they would patronize them were(17.0%) , those who said that advice from those who had been in business longer than them is needed to overcome challenges in business were (2.3%) while those who indicated that capital is needed to them to overcome challenges faced in business were(10.3%) . Majority of the respondents indicated that they required government support (69.7%). This finding supports literature. Abimbola, Emmanuel and Ahmadu (2007:1101) argued that government should implement programs to improve the lives of women entrepreneurs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between the sustainability options women derive in business and the totality of their experience the informal work sector. There is also a significant relationship between awareness of credit facilities and the ability to obtain credit from lending institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that government should ensure that women in the informal work sector are given support in order to ensure sustainability in the business. Also, it is recommended that programs should be implemented to improve the survival and performance of women owned ventures and credit facilities provided by government should be easily accessible to all small scale traders and those the programs are targeted at should be met because it was discovered according to Abimbola, Emmanuel and Ahmadu (2007: 10) that in Nigeria, many programs and legislation have been implemented to improve life for women entrepreneurs, but have not yielded results due to the fact that most of the facilities embedded in these programs do not reach those in need of them but are used to serve political officials and their loyalties. Therefore, proper monitoring should be put in place so that the policies put in place will obtain the desired result and the policy makers' attention will not be diverted elsewhere.



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