

## Women Entrepreneurship as a Panacea to Poverty Alleviation in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Women involvement in economic development has been recognized as important in the area of entrepreneurship. This study examined women entrepreneurship as a panacea to poverty alleviation in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area (LGA), Katsina State, Nigeria. A longitudinal survey research design was adopted for the study and a structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data while student t-test was used to analyze data and test the hypotheses. The result from data analysis revealed that; annual income level and annual savings of women entrepreneurs have increased significantly. Hence, women entrepreneurs are still facing some challenges such as; lack of adequate capital for business operation and expansion, lack of awareness on various business opportunities and poor attitude of some husbands towards women entrepreneurship. In order to address these challenges and encourage women participation in entrepreneurial activities and reduce poverty level among women, the study recommends that the government and religious leaders should take up the responsibility of giving orientation and public enlightenment campaign on the importance of women entrepreneurship in the society and economic development of a nation, there should be sensitization programmes that will orientate and enlighten women on the various entrepreneurial activities that enhance productive returns within the limit of religious injunction.

**Keywords:** *Women Entrepreneurship, Empowerment Programmes, Poverty Alleviation, Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State, Nigeria*

## Background to the Study

All over the world, entrepreneurship particularly among women has become an important component of academic and policy conversation. This will not be unconnected with the fact that women entrepreneurship is vital to the economy of a nation with respect to economic development and poverty reduction. In as much as the government of a country is required to provide the adequate empowerment programmes and the enabling environment for entrepreneurship development, women entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important untapped source of economic growth and poverty reduction for the past one decade throughout the world. Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and / or career commitment of providing value for some products or services (Robert, 2013).

Women entrepreneurs are simply women that participate in total entrepreneurial activities, who take the risks involved in effective utilization of human and material resources in a unique way so as to take advantage of the opportunity identified in their immediate environment through production of goods and services. A woman entrepreneur is the person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. With the advent of media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations. Presently, across the world women are found indulged in every line of business from provision of service to product. . A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, which is capable of contributing values to both family and social life.

However, female entrepreneurs in some parts of Nigeria are often underestimated and overlooked. They are often hindered because of family responsibilities, cultural barriers and religious beliefs. Furthermore, Amaka (2007) observed that Nigerian women are more vulnerable to poverty owing to a number of factors including absence of opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources (credit, land ownership and inheritance), lack of access to education and support services and minimal participation in the decision-making process.

Hence, since entrepreneurship is being considered as a key strategy for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of the poor in Nigeria, the Katsina state government has been very supportive, particularly in relation to the recent empowerment programmes in order to address the problem of poverty among women through the ministry of Women Affairs. The state established different empowerment programmes for women, in order to impact some skills and to give other necessary trainings including financial assistance that will encourage self-employment and reduce or even, eradicate poverty in the state.

However, despite these efforts by Katsina state government to reduce poverty through establishment of women empowerment programmes across the state including, Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, the state still has the highest poverty rate of 74.5 among all states in the North West region (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012) and has 82.2% poverty index according to the United Nation's Global Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index, 2015. It was based on this poverty report that the researchers are determined to investigate the

contribution of women empowerment programmes in the state to poverty reduction of women entrepreneurs in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of the State. Dutsin-Ma is one of the 34 local governments of Katsina State with 16 district heads.

#### Objectives of the Study

Based on the poverty rate above, the primary objective of this study is to investigate women entrepreneurship as a panacea to poverty alleviation in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. The specific objectives are to:

#### Hypotheses

1. Examine the annual income levels of women entrepreneurs after benefiting from women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.
2. Examine the annual savings of women entrepreneurs after benefiting from women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.
3. Identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Dutsin-Ma local Government Area.

In other to realize the objectives of this study, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Ho1: There is no significant increase in the annual income level of women entrepreneurs after benefiting from women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

Ho2: There is no significant increase in the annual savings of women entrepreneurs after benefiting from women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

#### Limitation

Meanwhile, this study is limited to only women that have participated in entrepreneurship activities for the past three years after benefiting from different women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. The limitations of this study include: lack of adequate records to indicate the actual number of women and women entrepreneurs within Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, for instance, their businesses are not registered, hence difficulty in getting the total number of women entrepreneurs in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. Most of the women in the study local government are practicing small scale businesses and not entrepreneurship per se. Though, for the purpose of the study, the researchers have based the women population in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area on the total number of Women Entrepreneurs that have been empowered from different women empowerment centre in the Local Government. Similarly, women that have engaged in small scale businesses have been considered as practicing entrepreneurship.

The result of this study will serve as a gauge of the performance of the women empowerment programmes in Katsina state and Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area in particular. It may also serve as a guide to the Government in formulating similar policy in the areas of women empowerment, entrepreneurship development and poverty reduction among Nigerian women. Similarly, the study may likely encourage women participation in productive and economic activities available in the society.

## Conceptual Clarifications

### Women Empowerment Programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area

Empowerment of women involves making women gainfully employed by increasing their economic, political, social, educational status, including releasing the knowledge, experience, and motivation. Empowerment of women entrepreneurs is essential for achieving the goals of sustainable development and removing the bottlenecks hindering their growth and full participation in the business. It enables them to work towards helping themselves to achieve educational, economic, psychological, social and political interlinked.

There are two main programmes organized for women in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, these are Women Development Centre and Business Apprenticeship Training Centre.

**Women Development Centre:** This was established in the year 2010 by Katsina State Government to train women on how to engage in businesses even when they are at home. The programmes offer by this centre include: Sewing, Weaving, Shoe-making, Cosmetics and Jewellery production. Every trainee on sewing skill and weaving is entitled to one free sewing machine and weaving machine respectively after graduation, while others on shoe-making, cosmetics and Jewellery production trainees are entitled to #10,000 or \$50 each at the end of the training programmes.

**Business Apprenticeship Training Centre:** This was initially organized for men but later initiated and converted to women empowerment centre in 2011. The centre admits new participants or trainees once in a year and graduates them after a year of training. The programmes available at this centre are; sewing, hair dressing, catering and weaving. Each participant of the aforementioned skills is entitled to #1,000 or \$5 allowances every month as motivation.

## Review of Related Literature

Nigerian women perform complex and multiple roles as mothers, workers and managers of households, taking care of their husbands, children and members of their extended families. Yet, it has been observed that they are still more prone to poverty owing to lack of economic empowerment and required enabling environment for entrepreneurship development. However, women entrepreneurs around the world are major contributors to the economy, as they are making a positive contribution in the socio-economic development and employment generation in their communities. For example, in Zambia (International Labour Office, 2003a), a research was conducted on a sample of 118 women entrepreneurs owning 144 firms. It was found that they provided employment for 1,013 persons of which 973 were full-time employees. Employment which is created by these women is often directed towards other women. Similarly, in Tanzania (International Labour Office, 2003b), 128 women entrepreneurs were interviewed and it was reported that they provided full-time employment for 752 persons.

Furthermore, Galbraith (2008) opined that the economy of developing nations can be improved through entrepreneurship development. In another studies, Jill, Thomas, Lisa and Susan (2007) and Tata and Prasad (2008) concluded that both physical capital and

connection networks as well as training were necessary for entrepreneurial success and that the performance of female-run micro-enterprises can be influenced by social capital, motivation and opportunity to engage in collaborative exchange. This economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs is essential for achieving the goals of sustainable development and removing the bottlenecks hindering their growth and full participation in businesses (especially women entrepreneurs in Nigeria), Such as lack of access to credit and other opportunities. Meanwhile, Ekpe (2011) in a research conducted on 158 women entrepreneurs in the North region of Nigeria concluded that women entrepreneurs in Nigeria possess the necessary characteristics for entrepreneurial success

Moreover, the need for periodic evaluation of the performance of women entrepreneurs who have benefited from different women empowerment programmes in their localities was supported by Antoncic (2006). He asserted that a minimum of 3 years business experience is considered sufficient to assess an entrepreneur, while Swieczek and Thanhha (2003), in Vietnam and Porter and Nagarajan (2005), in India, argued for 4-6 years business experience and 5 years minimum business experience respectively. Meanwhile, successful women entrepreneurs were expected to be well-determined, self-confident, self-controlled and to have invested in productive activities. The evidence from the literature review above indicates that Nigerian women entrepreneurs can equally have a major economic impact that fosters economic growth and development and poverty reduction by gaining economic independence through economic empowerment.

#### Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is longitudinal research design, because longitudinal research design includes conducting several observations of the same subjects over a period of time. The population of the study comprises of 570 women that were empowered in the Women Development Centre and that were trained in Business Apprenticeship Training Centre in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. Stratified sampling technique was used to randomly select 200 women from the six empowerment programmes of the study. The questionnaire schedule was mainly used to collect primary data while secondary sources were collected from statistical records of ministry of women affairs Katsina state, Women Development Centre and Business Apprenticeship Training Centre in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. Other secondary sources include internet browsing, textbooks and publications. Data was analyzed using student t test with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

#### Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the total of 200 questionnaires administered, 178 were valid and returned, 5 were invalid due to cancellation that made it difficult to code, and 17 were not returned. Therefore, the analysis was carried out using the complete data available on the two dependent variables- annual income and annual savings gathered from 178 respondents (table 5.1). Similarly, table 5.2 presents responses on the number of women entrepreneurs that have been upgraded from their initial poverty levels and those that are still within the poverty line.

Table 5.1: Data presentation on the two Dependent Variables used to investigate women Entrepreneurship as a Panacea to Poverty Alleviation in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area

Programmes	Frequency	Annual Income	
Nature of programmes	Number of women Entrepreneurs	Maximum Average Income before Entrepreneurship	Maximum Average Income after Entrepreneurship
Sewing	29	6416	12315
Weaving	31	7350	21820
Shoe-making	37	4600	18700
Cosmetics/Jewelries	39	23873	56250
Hair dressing	12	5611	10300
Catering	30	7000	15542
Total	178	54850	134927
Programmes	Frequency	Annual Savings	
Nature of programmes	Number of women Entrepreneurs	Maximum Average savings before Entrepreneurship	Maximum Average savings after Entrepreneurship
Sewing	29	900	2250
Weaving	31	1278	4816
Shoe-making	37	2313	10750
Cosmetics/Jewelries	39	5350	21450
Hair dressing	12	1156	1356
Catering	30	1550	2115
Total	178	125477	42737

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 5.2 shows that, 107 (60.1%) respondents were upgraded from poverty as a result of entrepreneurship, while 71(39.9%) respondents are still within the poverty line.

Table 5.2: Responses on whether or not Entrepreneurship has upgraded women Entrepreneurs from Poverty

Entrepreneurship upgrades women Entrepreneurs from Poverty	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	107	60.1
No	71	39.9
Total	178	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2015

## Results of Data Analysis

Table 5.3.1: Paired T-test, using the Paired sample Statistics at 0.05 level of Significance

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Income before entrepreneurship	178	10070.1854	7393.44349	554.16202
Income after entrepreneurship	178	25331.8258	16772.22163	1257.13116
Savings before entrepreneurship	178	2361.3539	1653.50602	123.93552
Savings after entrepreneurship	178	8587.4607	7559.69689	566.62324

Table 5.3.2: Paired Sample Test

Variables	Paired Differences					T Value	df	Sig (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
I BE IAE	-15261.64	9722.69	728.75	-16699.79	13823.49	-20.94	177	.000
SBE SAE	-6226.11	5963.09	446.95	-7108.15	-5344.07	-13.93	177	.000

Source: Result of SPSS from the questionnaire administered, 2015

Note: IBE= Income before entrepreneurship  
 IAE= Income after entrepreneurship  
 SBE= Savings before entrepreneurship  
 SAE= Savings after entrepreneurship

### Result of the paired T-test

Results from the paired t- test value above show that the respondents earned more income after engaging in business activities than before starting the business. This was indicated by mean values (25331.8258) after engaging in entrepreneurial activities and mean values (10070.1854) before starting the business. Since the t- value (-20.94) is highly significant at 0.01% level of significance, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant increase in the annual income level of women entrepreneurs after benefiting from women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area is rejected. This means that there is significant increase in the annual income level of women entrepreneurs after benefiting from women empowerment programmes.

Similarly, the results also indicated that women entrepreneurs saved more (8587.4607 mean values) than before they engaged in entrepreneurial activities (2361.3539 mean values). Therefore, since the t-value (-13.93) is highly significant at 0.01%, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant increase in annual savings of women entrepreneurs after benefiting from women empowerment programs in Dutsin-ma Local Government is rejected.

#### Findings of the Study

The following findings were made; There exist women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area set up by the Katsina state government to train women in various businesses like tailoring, weaving, shoe-making, hair dressing, catering and cosmetics and jewelries. The empowerment programmes also involve financial assistance in form of allowances during the training program and start-up capital after the training programmes.

It was found that both the Income and savings levels of most of the women entrepreneurs particularly, those that gained empowerment in the areas of Weaving, Shoe-making and Cosmetics/Jewelries production (table 5.1) have increased significantly, and as such, their poverty levels have reduced. This was equally shown in table 5.2 where 107 (60.1%) respondents were reported upgraded from poverty level as a result of entrepreneurship. This is contrary to the findings of Tersoo (2013) which revealed that the operations of women entrepreneurs have not significantly impacted on the growth of Benue State economy due to the numerous operational challenges faced by them over the years.

Although, most of the women beneficiaries are found familiar with indoor businesses, they can also contribute to the economic development of the society, the state, and the country at large especially, if the government further grants safety and security of their businesses. In spite of the women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, women entrepreneurs are still considered facing many problems such as; lack of enough capital for business expansion, lack of entrepreneurship training to improve their knowledge on business awareness and orientation that can enhance high income generation and improve their standard of living and poverty reduction.

Furthermore, some women reported lack of freedom to fully participate in some entrepreneurial activities that are not indoor businesses as a result of socio-cultural and religious belief of their husbands. Thus, this hindered their output and income generation.

#### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, poverty level of most of the women entrepreneurs that have benefited from various women empowerment programmes in Dutsin-Ma local government area of Katsina state particularly, those that are familiar with the so-called small scale and indoor businesses have reduced and they tend to contribute more to poverty reduction and the economic development of the society if they have more financial empowerment to expand their businesses.



## Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study the following recommendations are provided:

1. The Katsina state government and Dutsin-Ma local government area in particular should lay more emphasis on empowering women in such programmes as Weaving, Shoe-making and Cosmetics /Jewelries production where women entrepreneurs recorded high income and savings levels after benefiting from the empowerment programmes. Similarly, the financial assistance of #1,000 or \$5 inform of monthly allowances during the training programmes and start-up capital of #10,000 or \$50 after the training programmes given to each participant of the Business Apprenticeship Training Centre and Women Development Centre respectively should be reviewed upward.
2. The government and religious leaders should be charged with the responsibility of organizing public enlightenment campaign on the importance of women entrepreneurship and the need for husbands to engage their wives in productive business activities within the limit of religions injunction.
3. More so, government should organize proper business orientation programmes that will enlighten women entrepreneurs on the latest technology used in various businesses. Thus, this will make them more creative and more productive.
4. Apart from training programmes, others such as; mentoring, trade fairs and exhibitions can also be introduced as sources for entrepreneurial development. Hence, the desired outcome of the business is quickly achieved and better business opportunities are found.
5. Furthermore, in order to foster rapid economic growth and development and poverty reduction among women, government at all levels should provide conducive and enabling environment for women entrepreneurship. That is, government must guarantee good roads, adequate supply of electricity, and ensure security of lives and businesses.
6. Although, the savings levels recorded in this research corroborate the income levels, this paper suggests an investigation of determinant of savings of entrepreneurs for further studies.

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