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## ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN MSEs: THE CASE OF EAST SHOA ZONE OF OROMIA REGIONAL STATE-ETHIOPIA

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**ETHIOPIA**

### ABSTRACT

*This study was designed to assess the factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in East Shoa Zone, Ethiopia. A sample of 203 women entrepreneurs engaged in MSEs was taken for the study using stratified and simple random sampling. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to women entrepreneurs who have their own business in selected three towns of East Shoa Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. Descriptive research was used to answer the research questions on the current status of the subject of the study and in reference to the objectives of the study. The study findings were able to show that, from the major factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs, the impact of the economic environment is significant even though the influence of social factors is minimal. The survey result also shows that women entrepreneurs having problem when they enter into the business. The implications of this study are discussed along with some recommendations.*

### KEYWORDS

entrepreneurs, factors, micro and small enterprises, performance, women.

### INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurs have become important players in the entrepreneurial landscape (Pages, 2005). Although the number is still small as compared to businesses owned by men, this is encouraging as it shows that women no longer adhere to the stereotype that only men can be wage earners in the family. Besides numerous obligations assigned to women including reproductive chores, such as childcare and doing house work, women can find success through their own businesses.

Though there have been limitations, obstacles and roadblocks faced by these women in the past, society have begun to accept that women entrepreneurs do contribute greatly to a country's economy. As such, it is no longer unexpected to see women heading their own companies and being successful at the same time. The general mindset has changed so much that women who juggle family with careers are looked upon as capable and competent to handle business independently. Moreover, it is no longer strange to have business dealings with a female. In Ethiopia, women have played a very important role in the economic development and stabilize the economy in periods of recession. Thus, the Ethiopian government has been continuously created and developed quality, resilient, and successful entrepreneurship by cultivate an enterprising culture among Ethiopian women.

Even though we observe a number of women entrepreneurs in the business, recent studies show that most of them are found in Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). According to the Ethiopian Central Statistics Authority (2004), almost 50% of all new jobs created in Ethiopia are attributable to small businesses and enterprises, and roughly 49% of new businesses that were operational between 1991 and 2003 were owned by women. To take appropriate measures for these problems, knowing the factors associated with the problems is a precondition for a problem well stated is half solved. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify the major factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in East Shoa Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia in running their own businesses and recommend the appropriate measures to be taken.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizations do not exist in a vacuum. Each organization is set in a particular environment to which it is inextricably linked. This environment provides multiple contexts that affect the organization and its performance, what it produces, and how it operates (Nabli and Nugent, 1989). As we refine and extend the original framework for organizational assessment, the concept of an enabling environment is key to understanding and explaining the forces that help shape the character and performance of organizations (Scott, 1995).

In term of the factors contributing to success of entrepreneurs in small business are varied. According to Yusuf (1995) the most critical factors contributing to business success consist of good management skills, access to financing, personal qualities, and satisfactory government support. Huck and McEwen (1991) studied in Jamaican business owners reported that business owners in Jamaica considered that the marketing factor is the most critical ingredient for the success of a business. Family's emotional or instrumental supports are one of the crucial success factors for women entrepreneurs. Lee and Choo (2001) studied work-family conflict in Singapore found that family members and others support can reduce the conflict of women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, owning business by female without interfering by family would have greater success in their business. Moreover, the women careers depend on the decision of their spouses rather than the other way around (Fernandez, 1981). A study of Nigerian women business owners by Ehigie and Umoren (2003) found that a high self-concept regarding their role in business and commitment to business can help women to become more successful entrepreneurs.

In Ethiopia, women have played a very important role in the economic development and stabilize the economy in periods of recession Thus, the Ethiopian government has been continuously created and developed quality, resilient, and successful entrepreneurship by cultivate an enterprising culture among Ethiopian women.

MSEs are playing major role for the economic development in Ethiopia. According to MOFED, (2010). the "opportunities readily available to Ethiopian women today were not there more than 24 years ago," As a result, more Ethiopian women are engaged in small and medium enterprises which have a favorable impact on regional development of a nation. Despite the rise in women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia specifically in SMEs, most of the researches on entrepreneurs are mainly focused on the men entrepreneurs than women entrepreneurs. Schorling (2006) study shows that in Ethiopia's situation MSEs are confronted by various problems, which are of structural, institutional and economic in nature. Lack of Capital, market and working premises, marketing problems, shortage of supply of raw materials and lack of qualified Human resources are the most pressing problems facing MSEs. Although the economic policy of Ethiopia paid due emphasis for entrepreneurship values and appreciation of the sector's contribution to the economy, there are still constraints related to infrastructure, credit, working premises, extension service, consultancy, information provision, prototype development, imbalance preferential treatment and many others, which therefore need proper attention and improvement.

Studies involving women entrepreneurs most of them relate to either on the reasons that women choose to become Entrepreneurs (Buttner and Moore, 1999; Lee, 1997; Sarri & Trihopoulou, 2005) or on the barriers that these women face while attempting to start up a business (Brindley, 2005; Menzies et al., 2004). Furthermore, most of these researches are done widely in the developed country like USA, UK under the individualistic culture orientation. In view of the growing number of women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, a study on this topic is now appropriate. Therefore, it is important to conduct research involving women entrepreneurs under a collective culture. This study aims at filling the gap by exploring factors affecting women entrepreneurs' performance in MSEs. It examines the influence of three factors –economic factors, Socio-cultural factors, legal and administrative- on the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs. The present study is also conducted



## NEED /IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The results of this study will highlight strategies that can be used by women entrepreneur's enterprises to overcome training, financial, entrepreneurial cultural and market access which hinder successful growth of the entrepreneurial business enterprises. Current and potential women entrepreneurs would gain from the study by getting an insight of the factors affecting the performance of their business, identifying the growth gaps and looking for the strategies to address them. Knowing their weaknesses would help them address and well diagnose.

Secondly, the government will find results of this study useful to economic planners who may require knowledge and adaptive strategies of successful business enterprises which can be used to identify needs for training, financing, entrepreneurial culture and market necessary for growth of business enterprises. This would help in crafting economic policies and strategies aimed at fighting poverty and unemployment through development of entrepreneurship. Thirdly, financial institutions will benefit from the study if they are interested in targeting business of women entrepreneurs and their enterprises particularly micro finance institutions (MFIs). They would be interested in gaining new knowledge of how to integrate all the necessary parameters required for sustained growth of women entrepreneur's enterprises rather than taking that provision of credit alone would guarantee success. Finally, other researchers, practitioners, consultants and business students who might use this study to borrow ideas on women entrepreneur's enterprises would find it very useful as a source of knowledge and a base for further research.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A national survey conducted by the Ethiopian Welfare Monitoring Unit as cited in Eshetu and Zeleke (2008) shows that women entrepreneurs in Ethiopia are not provided with adequate policy related and strategic support from the national government, and that the promotion of vibrant SMEs should be one of the most important priority strategies for empowering women, addressing abject poverty and unemployment in Ethiopia. Businesses and enterprises operated by women contribute for economic dynamism, diversification, productivity, competition, innovation and economic empowerment of the poorest of the poor. Historically, there has been a well-established tradition of women being involved in small businesses and enterprises. However, it is only recently that women's entrepreneurship has gained the attention of economic planners and policy makers particularly in developing countries in Ethiopia. Although the national government has come to acknowledge that supporting enterprises operated by women promotes gender equality and economic empowerment, the majority of enterprises operated by women face difficulty in terms of access to finance, resources, business skills and institutional support from the national government Ethiopian Ministry of Trade and Industry of Ethiopia (2003); National Bank of Ethiopia (2002); Negash & Kenea, (2003). The studies stressed that SMEs owned or operated by women in Ethiopia survive against tremendous odds of failure. Thus, in this study it is thought to assess the different factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in East Shoa Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia.

## OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the study was to *assess the factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs* and to determine how those factors affects the performance of women entrepreneur's performance in MSEs and in east shoa zone, Ethiopia and the specific objectives were to:

- i. To determine the factors that affects the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in east shoa zone, Ethiopia.
- ii. To determine how those factors affects the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in east shoa zone, Ethiopia.
- iii. To analyze the relationship between performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs and the factors affecting their performance in east shoa zone, Ethiopia

## BASIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study enquired *the factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs* East Shoa Zone, Ethiopia.

The study tried to answer the following specific research questions.

- What are the factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in east shoa zone, Ethiopia?
- How those factors affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in east shoa zone, Ethiopia.
- What are the relationship between performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs and the factors affecting their performance in east shoa zone, Ethiopia.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was adopted in this study. According to William (2006), descriptive research design is a process of collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study. While the study did not make use of hypothesis, the design was chosen in order for the study to answer questions on the current status of the subject of the research and in reference to the objectives of the study. The target population was women entrepreneurs in MSEs enterprises in east shoa zone of ormoia regional state, Ethiopia and *A sample of 203 women entrepreneurs engaged in 5 sectors was taken for the study using stratified and simple random sampling.* According to Mugenda (2003), a sample size is the number of items selected from a sample frame or accessible population for observation. Mugendas' asserts that a sample of 10% of the accessible population is quite representative.

## FINDINGS

Assessments of factors affecting performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs depend on several factors that differ from place to place. This study conducted factors affecting performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs East Shoa Zone of Regional State, Ethiopia attempted to include those factors that have direct and indirect relevance with the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs. The major findings of this study were discussed as follows:

The major economic factors that affect women entrepreneurs in MSEs according to their severity order are lack of own premises or land ( $X=1.92$  &  $s.d=1.28$ ), lack of financial access ( $X=1.93$  &  $s.d=1.34$ ), stiff competition in the market, ( $X=2.12$  &  $s.d=1.14$ ), inadequate access to training, lack of access to technology, and raw materials. Infrastructure problems ( $X=3.59$  &  $s.d=1.37$ ), and access to information ( $X=3.69$  &  $s.d=1.38$ ) are not serious economic problems for these entrepreneurs. The major socio-cultural factors that affect the respondent women entrepreneurs in MSEs in the study area according to their severity order are Conflicting gender roles ( $X=2.02$  &  $s.d=1.21$ ), Social acceptability and Contact (network) with outsiders ( $X=2.08$  &  $s.d=1.13$ ). However, prejudices or class biases ( $X=3.48$  &  $s.d=1.32$ ), gender inequality ( $X=3.55$  &  $s.d=1.43$ ), attitude of employees to the business ( $X=3.62$  &  $s.d=1.4$ ), harassments and relationship with the workforce are not as such problems that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs.

The major legal and administrative factors that affect the respondent women entrepreneurs in MSEs according to their severity order are lack of network with administrative bodies ( $X=1.85$  &  $s.d=1.23$ ), access to policy makers ( $X=1.9$  &  $s.d=1.28$ ), amount of tax levied ( $X=1.93$  &  $s.d=1.29$ ), interest rate charged, bureaucracies and red tapes, over all legal and regulatory environments. Nevertheless, government incentives, legal, institutional and policy constraints, assistant and support from government bodies and request of collaterals are not problems. Of the major factors that affect the respondent women entrepreneurs in MSEs, economic factors take the leading position (grand  $X=2.49$  & grand  $s.d=0.1$ ) followed by legal/administrative (grand  $X=2.59$  & grand  $s.d=0.06$ ) and socio/cultural factors (grand  $X=3.18$  & grand  $s.d=0.12$ ) respectively.

## RECOMMENDATION

Even though entrepreneurship is not free of risks, existing and potential entrepreneurs should not see it as a last resort. This is because starting own business creates sense of independence, flexibility and freedom; make own boss, give time and financial freedoms. The Government of Ethiopia should train the women entrepreneurs in a systematic and continuous process in order for women entrepreneurs to maintain quality products which can enable them fetch high prices and on the other hand it can lead to reduction of imported Products brought about by consumer preference for imported goods. Women entrepreneurs should be assisted by the government through subsidies so as to ensure that they buy the raw maters for their respective business (product/service) at a lower price. This

will help many unemployed Ethiopians in general and women in particular to venture into different businesses which will thus reduce unemployment status in Ethiopia. There is need to evaluate and modify both the local, traditional knowledge and foreign mechanism with the aim of developing appropriate strategies for improving businesses in Ethiopia. Management of SMEs should strive to get competent employees with proper training and skills so as to compete well in the market. Inventory to document the types and quantities and qualities of the range of the business success related factors should be researched, the support given should be research based.

To tackle the different economic, social/cultural and legal/ administrative bottlenecks they face, women entrepreneurs should make lobbies together to the concerned government officials by forming entrepreneur's associations. Besides this, women entrepreneurs in MSEs should search for other alternative supporting agents like NGOs, banks and other supporting organizations. Lastly, Women entrepreneurs in MSEs of the town should share experiences with other entrepreneurs in other towns and regions so that they can learn a lot from best practices of those entrepreneurs.

## CONCLUSION

Women Entrepreneurs in MSEs are important to almost all economies in the world, but especially to those in developing countries and, even if it is delivered practically, attention might not be given by women entrepreneurs. Even if this is the case, women entrepreneurs in MSEs still contribute for the countries development. MSEs are becoming an important area of emphasis for many developing countries in general and to Ethiopia in particular, primarily for its immense potentials as a source of employment given that there are a number of factors that affect their performance. In relation to legal/administrative issues, network with administrative bodies, access to policy makers, amount of tax and interest rate charged, bureaucracies and red tapes and the overall legal and administrative environmental factors are the serious problems of women entrepreneurs in MSEs in the town. But, issues related to government incentives, legal, instructional and policy constraints, assistance and support from government bodies and request of collateral for borrowing money are not found to be problems of women entrepreneurs in MSEs. This highlights that there are some beginnings in encouraging women entrepreneurs in MSEs even though this is not believed to be satisfactory. From the major factors that affect the performance of women entrepreneurs in MSEs, the impact of the economic environment is significant even though the influence of social factors is minimal. This implies, the impact of globalization is reflected in women entrepreneurs in MSEs; but the attitude of the society towards women entrepreneurs seems to be relatively changed.

## SCOPE OF FURTHER STUDIES

Factors affecting women entrepreneurs' performance in MSEs are not limited to the factors stated in this study, thus the researcher believes that there were various factors affecting the performance of women SMEs entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, which are not included in this study and This study could be suffering from the limitations of sampling bias. We acknowledge the failure to obtain a "truly representative" sample. The entire sample was located in the southern region (East Shoa Zone) In Oromia, Ethiopia. Thus, certain businesses may not be represented appropriately in the sample and the results of this research cannot be generalized to the entire women entrepreneur community. As such, the findings might be skewed towards women entrepreneurs who open small-and-medium sized enterprises and it also limited to some few sectors. It is therefore recommended that future researchers should try to find out other factors that may be of concern hindering the growth in various industries so that proper measures and recommendations are put in place to encourage investment in those sectors.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is impossible to mention all, those who helped me in undertaking this research, I thank all of them particularly I indebted to my wife, Shitaye Adugna for her unreserved support and encouragement throughout my studies. Her strong commitment to take responsibility to manage the housework, care for our children and handle social affaire made it possible for me to complete this research work.

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