

Getting Ghanaian Women Empowered To Venture Into Male Dominated Professions: What Are Some Of The Critical Issues?

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Abstract

The research was undertaken to identify factors which are critical in encouraging and broadening the entrepreneurial focus of the Ghanaian woman. Traditionally, women have been forced to narrow their entrepreneurial pursuit because many of the jobs in the country are male-dominated. This limitation on the part of women in Ghana has restricted their job hunting and nurturing of some business opportunities. The study used a cross sectional study by using Kumasi which is one of the biggest cities in the country. A mixture of sampling technique was adopted because at some stage, some specific women were required and so purposive sampling was appropriated. At another level, a group of women was randomly selected to ensure fairness. With the help of interview sessions and questionnaire, data was obtained for eight critical explanatory variables including Age of the woman, level of education, mentoring effect, job risk, need factor of women, difficulty in task performance, preparation towards marriage and family background. A logistic model (LOGIT) was used to run a regression and it was discovered that, though 5 out of the 8 variables were significant, the combine effect of all the variables were significant at 5%. The research then concluded that, the age of the woman, embedded risk in Male Dominated Professions (MDP), level of education of the woman, the presence of mentor and the family background of the woman were critical in empowering them to take up MDP.

Keywords: Empowering, Male-Dominated Professions, Ghanaian women, Logit model.

1.0 Introduction

Women empowerment ensures that the marginalized woman is moved closer to opportunities that can help rationalize every intimidating occurrence. It is mainly related to their participation in decision making with regards to raising and distributing resources. The global conference on women empowerment in 1998 highlighted empowerment as the best of making own partners in the development of women and children in rural areas. Their idea was corroborated by Menon and Prabhu (2001) in their strong plea for investing in women equality on the grounds that it makes economic sense. They indicated that, the social rate of return on investments in women is always greater than the corresponding rate for men. In Ghana, most jobs are considered to be the reserve of men and this has hampered the development of the Ghanaian woman for decades. This actually leaves women with very limited opportunities to explore and that accounts for why most women are unemployed in Ghana today. The Ghanaian society has now reached a stage where women are left with no choice but to venture into the Male-Dominated Professions (MDPs). This project sounds very

laudable but it can be a difficult task to start and to implement effectively but the consolation is that, many examples of empowerment projects have succeeded (Sughosh India Foundation, 2010). In the 19th century in the kingdom of Dahomey in West Africa, thousands of women served in the armed forces of the Dahomean king and in the eyes of observers were better fighters than their male counterparts. Research and archaeological evidence indicates that women were warriors in ancient Ireland and some were trained in weaponry. Sanday (1981) reiterated that instead of looking for biological imperatives to explain the division of labour in gender, researchers must resort to configurations such as featuring flexibility and integration of men and women and other rigid segregation by gender. It is therefore evident that segregation must not be based on sex difference when it comes to performance of a duty. According to Deneulin and Lila (2009), entire nations, businesses, communities and groups can benefit from the implementation of programs and policies that adopts the notion of women empowerment. These programs necessarily must espouse education and training because it plays a major role in changing the life

of the poor woman. Since women must take their rightful places in society, they must be developed and that can be attained by improving her status and bargaining power in the economy (Paten, 2002). It is further indicated that, the appropriate strategies and approaches to effectively handle such assignments could be possible by outlining the mechanisms and tools that can influence the woman (Sushmasachay, 1998). This explains why the programs initiated for women development must be tailor made.

It is worth noting that the woman as part of our population is classified as the poor, the vulnerable, the weak, the oppressed and the discriminated. Though hampered with these characteristics, they must be empowered to have control over their lives in order to better their socioeconomic and political conditions. These drawbacks render the woman structurally and culturally bankrupt and so can hardly indulge in self empowerment. In that regard, external agents are required to empower her. The two most important questions facing all stakeholders are therefore;

- (i) Who empowers these women?
- (ii) How and when do we empower them?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empowerment strategies

Women are empowered by either making them economically sound so that they could become confident enough to tackle gender inequalities. Lending credit to women in business makes them function well in the society and the families they find themselves. Since the primary goal in the foundation of micro finance was women empowerment, loans must be made accessible to them (Bateman, 2010). It will also increase their bargaining power and enhance their confidence in all dealings when they are empowered to possess their rightful portions (Agarwal 1994). Another way to empower the woman is to allocate to her responsibilities which hitherto would have been for men. They would be respected and treated with dignity for a work well done (Agarwal 2010). A Ghanaian scholar once said that when you educate a man, you educate an individual but when you educate a woman, you educate a nation'. It is therefore deduced from the quotation that when women are empowered, there are so many benefits which could spread beyond the family to the entire nation. The United Nation

Research Institute (2010) acknowledged the fact that women continual participation in the informal sector would apparently grow the economy astronomically. In Ghana for instance, the informal sector where most women ply their trades holds the key to most of the raw materials that feed the industrial sector hence as more women enter the sector, many benefits would be accrued to the nation. Between 1997 and 2004 the number of privately held firms owned by women of colour in the United States of America grew by 54.6% while the overall number of firms grew by only 9% over the same period. A 2003 Babson College/Mass Mutual report on women in family owned business found that female-owned firms are nearly twice as productive as male-owned enterprises. The report captured the fact that women generated their sales with far fewer media employees (26 individuals compared with 50 in male-owned firms). The report therefore concluded that women in business do more with less. Again in the United States of America, women owned a business generates a number of employment and revenue to the nation. As of 2007 there were 7.8 million women-owned businesses in the United States and that reflected 20.1% increase from 2002 to 2007. Again in nonfarm businesses across the country women owned businesses account for 28.7% of the total which generates \$1.2 trillion in receipts and in the health sector about 52% of the businesses are women owned (Womentomorrow, 2011). An important fact which cannot be disputed is that, empowered women develop self control and confidence which signifies the ability to initiate developments. According to Ozer and Bandura (1990), personal and social change through empowerment methods achieve their effects by equipping people with the requisite knowledge, skills and resilient self beliefs of efficacy to alter aspect of their lives over which they can exercise some control.

2.2 Barriers to Women Empowerment

Many challenges to women empowerment can be attributed to the culture of certain nations and societies. A typical example is the Ghanaian situation where women who try to enter into Male-Dominated Professions are ardently discouraged. In some cases they are advised to refrain from those jobs because it could affect them adversely in child bearing. As a result of this and other issues, women go through unrefined

pressures while others become used to being treated inferior to men (Nussbaum, 1995). In effect some cultures have become the status quo in the society and so men in particular find it difficult to compromise. This has allowed the norms in the society to block societal development. The Chronicle news paper in Ghana (2011) carried a story of a 42 year woman who had taken to fishing. She claimed but for perseverance, her community would have discouraged her at the initial stages when the idea to go into fishing was conceived. It is in line with some of these examples that Onyedim (2013) argues that African women hardly present themselves to demand what is rightfully theirs.

2.3 Overcoming the Barriers

Empowerment begins with the mindset of the individual who is being empowered. Therefore if an individual is not psychologically tuned towards empowerment, any resource being committed for that purpose would go waste. Skinner (2003) identified that individuals who perceive life events as generally beyond their personal control tend to exhibit a more external locus of control (the belief that certain actions will produce certain results in a given situation); individuals who perceive the outcome of events to be within their personal control tend to exhibit a more internally oriented locus of control. This assertion buttresses the point that, the success of women empowerment is only a mirage if the success is not conceived in the mind ahead of the physical action. It was found that empowerment is facilitated when rehabilitated consumers adopt self determination behaviour. The consumers' self determination requires active involvement and a belief that personal actions will result in personal accomplishment (Kosciulek and Wheaton, 2003). Usually the self determination that should bring about empowerment is shielded by some past experience of the individual. The discovery made by Houser et al., (2000) indicates that, persons with disabilities usually experience disempowerment in many situations and roles that resulted in their disabilities. As a result, self empowerment in such circumstances is linked to the person's ability to successfully execute a particular task and gain situational control. A number of activities have been prescribed by Dolan (2011) to help remove the bottlenecks hindering the progress of women in Male-Dominated Professions. According to Dolan,

women in Male Dominated Professions must; abandon secretarial perspective; respect the male ego's; look for the toughest task to do; find influential mentor; be a horse and not a mule; take intelligent risk and network with them to the top. Maret McCoy, an executive coach for women on her part prescribed three strategies to be adopted by women in male dominated professions to defy the status quo and embrace success. These strategies included; the projection of powerful image through communication by speaking unequivocally with a deal of confidence; women must appoint their personal Board of Directors so that they could solicit ideas; and lastly women must engage in professions they are good at instead of displaying their weakness.

The tenets of the reviewed literature above and some informal discussions with selected women assisted in gathering issues which could be responsible for determining whether a particular woman would attempt entering male dominated professions or not. These informal discussions prompted certain questions which needed to be addressed in order to ensure that the main objective for this study was attained. These questions actually directed the focus of the research as it engraved some variables which effects were worth studying. The resulting research questions were;

1. Did women enter male dominated professions to find solutions to their pressing needs?
2. What are the social issues inhibiting women from engaging in male dominated professions?
3. Could risk in male dominated businesses prevent women from getting involved?
4. Would women be motivated to enter into male dominated professions if their mentors are in themselves?
5. Can the family background have effect on women interest in MDP?

3.0 Method

The research adopted a cross sectional study by concentrating on women in Kumasi, the busiest city in Ghana apart from Accra (the capital). Based on the body of knowledge from the literature and the informal discussions held with some women who had broken the status quo and

ventured into male dominated professions the research was placed in perspective. These discussions were extended to women who tentatively had the desire to venture into male dominated professions. Women who indicated affirmatively that they were nurturing plans to seek employment or set up their own businesses were the target for the research. They were in the best position to respond to the various questions posed since they had done some assessment on many different professions including MDPs.

3.1 Sampling Technique

In this research, any woman above the age of 18 was considered a right respondent if and only if she had the desire to seek for a job or set up her own business or already in business (either MDP or otherwise). For this reason, the study used purposive sampling to select women above 18 years. Subsequently, random sampling technique was used in gathering the data through interviews and questionnaire administration. Each respondent was made to respond to the same set of questions so that biases were eliminated from the eventual results.

3.2 Research Instrument and Data Collection

Two different tools were used in this study. This was to give all women the opportunity to be assessed irrespective of their background. The study designed a questionnaire for women who could communicate by writing to do so in their own time but within the allowable period. For the other group who could not read and write, interview sessions were organized with the same questions as in the questionnaire to solicit their views. The study did not use secondary data because of its less practical effect on this kind of research. The study sought to test the effects of the explanatory variables on the willingness of women to do male dominated businesses under immediate conditions. For this and other reasons, primary data was considered the best option because it took account of current environmental conditions unlike the secondary data which may have been collected for a different purpose (Stewart and Kamins 1993).

3.3 Research Design and Sample Size

Women who had attained age 18 or above and were permitted by the constitution of Ghana to

work were the appropriate units of the study. A total of 150 questionnaires were sent out for responses (including interviews). Out of this number, 99 women were subjected to personal interviews while 44 of them returned their fully completed questionnaires to the researcher. During the preliminary discussions prior to the data collection many women indicated that, they had remained unemployed because their husbands preferred that. This and many other reasons accounted for the size of the sample used for the research. This group of women who never had any hope of being allowed to work at any time by their husbands were excluded. Many market women also indicated that, they were introduced to selling in the market when they were children and so they do not have any knowledge about MDPs in the country.

The above research questions and the knowledge acquired from the literature together with the informal discussions held with the women generated the following variables. The cardinal objective was to discover how these variables influence women's willingness to pursue Male Dominated Professions (WWMDP). These variables were considered the explanatory variable and WWMDP the dependent variable.

- The need factor of the woman (NFW).
- The perceived risk in the male dominated businesses (PRIB).
- The presence of a mentor in a male dominated business (POM)
- Preparation towards marriage (PTM)
- Family background of the woman (FBW)
- The level of difficulty of the various assignments in a particular profession (LDT)
- The age of the woman to be considered (AOW)
- The level of education attained by the women (LEDC)

3.4 Empirical Model

The Logistic model was adopted because the dependent variable was qualitative in nature and also dichotomized based on the recommendation of (Gujurati 2006). The reason was that, all the respondents had an option of either 'yes' or 'No' to the question posed on the dependent variable

(WWMDP). The empirical model for the study

given the explanatory variables is given by;

$$WWMDP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 NFW + \beta_2 PRIB + \beta_3 POM + \beta_4 PTM + \beta_5 FBW + \beta_6 LDT + \beta_7 AOW + \beta_8 LEDC + \varepsilon_i$$

Where $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6, \beta_7, \beta_8$ are the coefficients of the explanatory variables while ε_i is the error constant. The age variable AOW is measured in years but the other variables are dummies. The coefficients signify the change in the dependent variable for a corresponding change in the explanatory or independent variables. These constants are to be determined by the regression

4.0 Discussion of Results

From **table 1** below, the Likelihood Ratio (LR) test shows a probability of 0.011561 indicating that the combined effect of all the variables was significant in determining whether a woman would take up a male-dominated business or not. According to the research results, five out of the eight explanatory variables were significant and so could play a major role in defining the women's willingness towards male-dominated businesses in Ghana. From the table, the significant ones were; AOW with a probability of 0.0462 indicating that, it is significant at 5% error permission level. This also means that, AOW has about 95% chance of making a meaningful contribution towards the realization that women could pick up male – dominated professions. The next variable FBW with a probability of 0.0050 was significant at 1% implying that, there was almost 99% chance of exhibiting strong influence on women. The other three variables were POM, PRIB and LEDC with probabilities of 0.1021, 0.0708 and 0.0384 respectively. These probabilities meant that POM was significant at 10%, PRIB also at 10% and LEDC was significant at 5%. The coefficient of these variables in the table together with their signs (either positive or negative) gave indications of the relationship between those variables and the woman selecting a male dominated profession. A positive sign indicated a positive correlation between the variables concern and vice versa. From that table of results, it was evident that as

using the Logistic model. Each slope coefficient in this equation measures the change in the estimated logistic for a unit change in the value of the given explanatory variable while holding other explanatory variables constant. The table below shows the results of the regression on the dependent variable WWMDP by the explanatory variables explained above.

the age of the woman advances, the log of the odds in favour of picking up a male dominated business reduces because of the negative sign. Any additional year a woman attains reduces the willingness to enter into male dominated professions. If a woman comes from a background where some women cherished male dominated professions, the log of the odds in favour of selecting or entering into such professions increases. It was also clear from the table that, the higher a woman goes with her education, the more increased the chances of picking MDP. The research again revealed that, when more women are seen to be engaging in male dominated businesses, the log of the odds of selecting a male dominated business by that mentee woman increases. Furthermore, the results indicated that as women continued to perceive an increasing degree of risk in particular business, the log odds in favour of selecting a male dominated business reduces. Though, the research found the other three variables (PTM, LDT and NFW) not to be significant, there were some important relationships worth mentioning. The results table 1 showed that, PTM correlated positively with the willingness to go into male dominated business while LDT and NFW correlated negatively with the zeal to enter into male dominated businesses.

Table 1: Results of The Regression

Dependent Variable: WWMDP Method: ML - Binary Logit

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-statistic	Prob
C	-0.330925	0.575646	-0.574876	0.5654
AOW	-0.803522	0.403131**	-1.993204	0.0462
FBW	1.086288	0.387063*	2.806490	0.0050
LDT	-0.034258	0.382182	-0.089639	0.9286
LEDC	0.132843	0.3977839**	0.333910	0.0384
NFW	-0.079059	0.381162	-0.207415	0.8357
POM	0.505055	0.387233***	1.304265	0.1021
PRIB	-0.358320	0.400374***	-0.894962	0.0708
PTM	0.249899	0.382421	0.653466	0.5135
Mean dependent var	0.517483	SD dependent var	0.501451	
S.E of regression	0.482143	Akaike info criterion	1.373230	
Sum squared residual	31.14991	Schwartz criterion	1.559703	
Log likelihood	-89.18593	Hannan-Quinn criterion	1.449003	
Restr. Log likelihood	-99.03262	Avg. Log likelihood	-0.623678	
LR Statistic (8df)	19.69337	McFadden R-square	0.099429	
Probability(LR Stat)	0.011561			

5.0 Conclusions

From the discussions, the research arrived at the following conclusions;

1. As a woman advances in age, she loses the zeal to put up in male dominated professions. They claim, it takes a lot of struggle to survive in such professions and so they found it appropriate to stay way.
2. Women were found to be risk averters and therefore would reluctantly pick up male dominated businesses because they perceived a lot of risks in them.
3. Highly educated women in Ghana have enough courage to do the job for the men because they believe that, what men can do, they can also do and even do it better. This showed that education is a necessary and sufficient factor to boost the morals of the Ghanaian woman.
4. If women could see clear examples of their fellow women taking up male dominated jobs, they become highly inspired and hence begin to emulate. On the other hand, the presence of mentors correlated positively with the willingness to do male dominated jobs.
5. The eagerness to do male dominated business was found to be hereditary. The reason was that, women with backgrounds where their families

have ever produced such enterprising individuals had the flair for male dominated professions.

6.0 Recommendation for Future Research

Since the research had some peculiar shortcomings, many variables could not be tested. The expensive manner in which data was collected limited the research to the eight explanatory variables which were tested. It is therefore recommended that in the near future researchers could widen the scope of this exercise and test more variables. Researchers could also review the performance of women who have been working in male dominated professions for a specified period of time.

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