



## Place of a Career Woman in Transformative Leadership and Entrepreneurship: Gender Perspective

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### Abstract

*In contemporary times, a lot of career women are venturing into businesses in order to maintain and sustain their standards of living and that of their various families. In fact, career women in recent times prefer entrepreneurship to active professional participation. This is because of the poor salary and allowance structures and the delay in the review of salaries and allowances of most professional career workers. Issues of gender are beginning to take centre stage in the Nigerian society. And whenever gender and its corresponding concepts are discussed, one realizes that people tilt towards supporting any struggle that has to do with the female gender. Concepts like career woman, feminism, lesbianism, girl-child education, motherhood, widowhood, queenship, female traditional title installation and so on keep coming up. The Nigerian people forget that gender is made up of male and female. The sympathy for the female gender has always dominated any discussion on gender. Gender and transformative leadership are trending especially among academics when it comes to appointment of females into leadership of tertiary institutions of learning especially in Nigeria – Vice-Chancellors for Universities, provosts for college of education and rectors for polytechnics. This is really a problem in the Nigerian context but fortunately, the entry of women into businesses or better put, entrepreneurship has increased tremendously. The challenge is that majority of these women in entrepreneurship endeavours are not career women and hence do not possess transformative leadership skills/abilities. By so doing, expansion in business becomes a huge problem. The career women prefer maintaining white-collar jobs-seeing business as double stress and a venture for the uneducated women. But is this perception true? Career women only earn salaries and allowances that in most cases are not enough for their up keep and that of their family members. Females that feel the negative impact more are those that are bread winners of their various families. This is the importance of venturing into business even if you are female lawyer, medical doctor, tertiary education lecturer, banker and so on. Entrepreneurship brings supplementary source(s) of survival (income). This paper is interested in unraveling the place of the career woman in entrepreneurship and how transformative leadership abilities can impact on enterprise.*

**Keywords:** Gender, transformative leadership, entrepreneurship and career woman.

**Introduction**

Gender and transformational leadership are two very interesting concepts that are beginning to gain momentum especially in contemporary Nigeria. In recent times, news on wives attacking their husbands mistress(es) are trending. Issues like a wife inviting her husband's mistress to the house, beating and stripping her (the mistress) to wife attacking her husband's mistress on the streets and urinating on her (the mistress) after stripping her naked have attracted reactions from both men and women in the society. Women that are caught in such acts, are perceived to lack transformative leadership qualities. It is also true that discussions on gender and gender issues have not been avenues for decent and well channeled information. Hence Nzewi (2017:1) noted that "discussions on gender and gender issues have always been shrouded in lot of wrong information and misconceptions". The perceptions of individuals differ and are placed according to gender and gender sentiments. Transformative leadership also is perceived as a gender issue. Kent, Blair, Rudd and Schuele (2010:52) stated that "...there is data to indicate that women leaders employ different leadership styles than men" (also see Grant, 1988, Kabacoff, 2001: Karau, and Easley, 1999; Kim and Shim, 2003; Rosener, 1990). This means that transformative leadership in a subtle way is gender sensitive and gender relative. The sensitization on entrepreneurship by institutions of higher learning is centred on both males and females engaging in one business or the other instead of relying on white-collar jobs. It is also believed that entrepreneurs are mainly males. But this paper centres on the female gender or better put, career women and their ability of performing if given leadership opportunities in any organization whether in business, education, religion, community, politics and so on.

Career woman attaining leadership positions try to make an impact, become innovative, transformative and transactional and so on, because of the stereotype on the situation.

Becoming a transformational leader has a lot to do with doggedness, commitment and dedication. In entrepreneurship, transformative leadership is highly recommended for success, quality and standard. Moore, Moore and Moore (2011:62) in a bid to promote trust building as part of entrepreneurship, transformative leadership and gender (male/female), stated that "the trust building, transformational leadership style developed by women to succeed in corporate environments; and which they further refine after making the transition to entrepreneurship, is well suited to dealing with operational challenges in turbulent economic environments. Women owner/managers create a climate of trust by using an interactive team-focused style. This is by encouraging open exchanges, collaborations and collective creativity, moves employees to the status of valued insiders and higher performers. This is a strategy in trying to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of women as transformative leaders. This paper opens up ideas on the place of the career woman in entrepreneurship and how her transformative leadership skills, abilities, and ideas can advance enterprise.

### **Conceptualization**

Conceptualization of terms in every paper is very essential. This is the reason that made Elom and Ossai (2018:142) averred that “clarification of concepts in any writing is very essential for easy understanding by the readers. When concepts are clarified, the readers are not overwhelmed because they would easily share the same level of understanding with the writer”. Furthermore, Mezieobi and Ossai (2018:146) stated that “in every write-up, the writer(s) considers the readers, hence conceptual clarifications. This is for the readers to understand the write-up from the writer’s perspective”.

On this note, according to Nzewi (2017:1), gender means “the social construction of female and male identity which is more than biological differences between men and women. It includes the way in which those differences have been valued, used and relied upon to classify women and men and to assign roles and expectations to them”. Aydon (2015) also affirmed that gender is “the social phenomenon of distinguishing males and females based on a set of identity traits, it is a social not physiological or biological construction”. On the part of Mondesire (2013), Gender is referred to as “socially constructed roles of and reactions between men and women”. For this paper, gender will mean all the identity traits that distinguish men from female which are mainly social constructions. On the other hand, the word leadership according to Hanson (2016) has four meanings

1. Leadership is the position of being the leader of a group, organization and country.
2. Leadership is the quality of being good at leading a group, organization, country and so on.
3. Leadership is the position of being in front of others in an activity or competition.
4. Leadership is the duty of all the people who lead a group, organization, country and so.

Therefore, educational leadership according to Mezieobi and Nzokurum (2014) means “all the personnel, agencies, commissions, boards that are concerned with “the (effective) operation of educational organizations” (Ololube, 2013:3) in order to accomplish national educational goals as prescribed by a national (or state) national policy on education”.

### **The Concept Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship has become a popular word in the mouths of Nigerians. According to Etuk and Mbat (2010) entrepreneurship means the process through which individuals and/or government either on their own or jointly exploit available economic opportunities without being scared by associated risks or inadequate resources under their control. Obilo (2011:21) opined that entrepreneurship “is the practice of starting new organization, particularly new business, generally in response to identified opportunities”. Entrepreneurship will mean the process of turning a business idea into a money-making or profit realization venture and sustaining it appropriately.

### **Career and Career Woman**

For one to realize a working definition of the term 'career woman' one needs to give a concise definition of both career and woman. Career in a nutshell means a vocation or profession engaged by an individual for purposes of earning a living, progressing and trying out opportunities. It is significantly controlled by time. This is because it involves a period in an individual's life-time- from employment to retirement.

The term woman is basically referred to as the word used for all adult female. In summary, career woman is any female that is linked to a particular occupation, engages on daily basis in making sure that the organization she works for excels and earns a living from the occupational earnings. This career woman in most cases puts her job first and gives it priority attention.

### **Career Woman and Entrepreneurship: The Link**

The relationship between a career woman and her involvement in entrepreneurship activities is not well known. But in truism, every career woman works for one organization or the other. That organization may be financial organization, educational organization, religious organization, healthcare organization, governmental organization and so on. If at all any of these organizations is profit-driven, the career woman gets involved in promoting and marketing that organization in order to maintain sustenance of her job or career. By so doing, she is indirectly involved in entrepreneurship ventures. She acquires and/or develops various skills as a career woman through any organization she is attached to/with. The entrepreneurship policies if at all there are any can link career women with entrepreneurship. The belief that entrepreneurship brings about high level of economic growth in a country needs to be relooked. According to Sanchez (2013) "policy makers and economists generally think that the higher the level of entrepreneurship in a country the greater its levels of economic growth and innovation". "Academic research has also shown strong relations between entrepreneurial activity and economic performance" (Van Praag and Versloot, 2007) and according to Loda and Vozikis (1996) "the need to establish a global business climate whereby entrepreneurship assumes a prominent role". The Nigeria situation has proven to be different. Hence the European Commission (2006) has noted that "it is further thought that high level entrepreneurship can be reached through education" especially through entrepreneurship education which some institutions of higher learning have introduced to students as a course or module.

Transformative leadership skill is one skill that is developed by a career woman in a bid to working with an entrepreneurship venture. Moore, Moore and Moore (2011) pinpointed that "...that the leadership skills developed by women in corporate environments and later applied in building their own businesses enable them to deal successfully with the uncertainties of a down-turned economy". The involvement of a career woman in entrepreneurship moulds her organizational behaviour. This behaviour helps her in attending to customers or clients as the

2. Opening up a provision store
3. Supplies and distribution of confectionaries.
4. Event planning – like weddings, parties, launching and so on.
5. In contemporary Nigeria, starting up a religious gathering like a church and becoming a clergy – pastor or reverend has become a juicy entrepreneurship venture.
6. Business of selling clothing, including shoes and bags.
7. Starting-up a baby shop (a shop where baby cloths and so on are sold).
8. Funeral planning
9. Cleaning business-contract

These entrepreneurship options will still give the career woman the opportunity of running her business and still maintain her career. If for example the career woman is a university professor, she can go to classes, teach her courses, supervise projects, attend meetings whilst running her business. Alternatively, she can employ some individuals to run the business while she oversees it and so on.

#### **The Career Woman and Entrepreneurship Leadership Skills**

The career woman must have developed some leadership skills through her career that can be very useful in entrepreneurship. Also, there are career women with some skills like hair dressing, tailoring, weaving and plaiting, home maintenance, interior decoration, catering services and so on. These career women are allowed to develop those skills and plough into starting up a business. Some entrepreneurship leadership skills that a career woman must possess for her to maintain her career and sole business may include:

1. Knowing that entrepreneurship and leadership have to do with managing human and material resources, strategic vision is one important entrepreneurship leadership skill.
2. Communication/inter-personal relationships
3. Ability to spot and retain talents irrespective of the individual.
4. Delegation is a skill that a career woman as an entrepreneur cannot do without. It is not possible for a career woman entrepreneur to be everywhere, so the skill of knowing who can do what and when, how and why is very important.
5. Ethical practices help a career woman entrepreneur to lead by example. This is because the business owner is like a brand/ambassador of the business.
6. Consultations – career women in business must have understood that asking for advice is very essential for successes in business.

7. A career woman will also understand the importance of developing leaders, individuals that will stand in for her while she is out working in her job.
8. Ability to strategically say No when necessary and "Yes" when appropriate is an entrepreneurship leadership skill.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has looked at the place of a career woman as an entrepreneur and her display of transformative leadership characteristics. With the economic situation of Nigeria in contemporary times, individuals are advised to start-up one business or the other irrespective of their occupations. This is to say that university lecturers, teachers, medical doctors, lawyers, bankers and so on can maintain one business or the other without being distracted. This is one way to make life more enjoyable and exciting. It was found out that career women have particular businesses they engage in to supplement their income and for support purposes. These career women also transfer their transformative leadership strategies acquired from their careers to their numerous businesses. The gap is that in contemporary times, career women are venturing into various entrepreneurship ventures because salaries and allowances from their professional endeavours are not enough for their sustenance and that of their families. This is such that these career women in businesses also employ the transformative leadership skills and knowledge they have acquired through in-service training, career workshops and other career development programmes into their numerous businesses. This helps in the advancement and development of these entrepreneurship ventures and can also affect their input and productivity levels in the various careers or professions.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are apt for this paper:

1. More pieces of research should be carried out on gender, career womanhood, entrepreneurship and transformative leadership.
2. Such pieces of research should be properly and adequately disseminated
3. Career women should be encouraged to start up one business or the other. This is for the sake of augmenting salary.
4. Career women should be allowed to develop one skill or the other related to entrepreneurship.
5. A mix of career and business should be promoted by both men and women.
6. Any stereotype that comes with career women in some business should be debunked.

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