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Gender Discourses, Culture and Entrepreneurial Development in Africa: Experience from Nigeria

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Abstract:

This paper is a discourse on culture and entrepreneurship in terms of which they represent a treatise in cultural theory, entrepreneurship, gender and economic development in two crucial areas: (i) the relationship between cultural values and entrepreneurship in the context of gendered entrepreneurial ideas and its praxis and (ii) the constraints such cultural values and practices may have on the development of entrepreneurship in the context of Nigeria. The method of inquiry is derived from critical theory and discursive praxis. Significantly, the paper argues that the manner in which entrepreneurial theories are gendered is a hindrance for the development of a robust entrepreneurial theory that is inclusive of both male and female entrepreneurs. In so doing, it is suggested that the masculine dominated ideas that permeate the theories and the eclipse of feminine qualities when defining and reading entrepreneurship is a hindrance to the development of a sustainable entrepreneurial culture and thus an obstacle to national economic development. The paper consists of four parts. Part one focuses on the introduction. Part two deals with the concept of culture, entrepreneurship and economic development and shows how entrepreneurship is seen as a product of webs of culture. Part three deals with how entrepreneurial discourses reflect a patriarchal mode of reasoning and the effect of gendered discourses on the practice of entrepreneurship. Part four suggests strategies for the development of a sustained entrepreneurial culture through cultural re-programming, intervention and re-orientation. Finally, the paper cautions against the danger inherent in turning reified concepts into manufactured reality, which then becomes the basis for action.

Keywords: Culture, entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, gender, discourse, economic development

1. Introduction: Cultural Values, Gender and Entrepreneurial Development

The ongoing debate in Nigeria on the issue of gender equality among men and women, and especially female participation in some sectors of the economy, has received heightened intensity in the economic, social, religious and political discourse. But first, what is a *discourse*? Our understanding of the concept of discourse is that it denotes a set of statements, concepts, theses and theories in speech and in writing, which together form an articulated conception or understanding of something in particular. Thus, in using the terms gender discourses, cultural discourses and entrepreneurial discourses, we shall be referring merely to the statements, the theses, the theories and the cultural values upon which these concepts are manifested and their effects on entrepreneurial praxis in Nigeria. All forms of connected and interrelated statements voice an opinion descriptively or normatively about something. Stated in different words, the discourse of entrepreneurship and the manner in which its theories and theses are articulated are seen here as certain ways by which normative opinions regarding culture and entrepreneurship are 'voiced' within the Western and African societies.

In a predominantly patriarchal society such as Nigeria, the issue of gender equality has become relevant as a result of the process of globalization and the global economy, changes in demography, occupational mobility and the breakdown of previously held taboos. These forces and changes have made the debate on equal rights among men and women imperative. Essentially, the focus of the on-going debate is, among other things, on the role of gender and gendered ideas and practices in entrepreneurship and the impact they have on the process of economic development.

The patriarchal nature of gender relationship in the Nigerian society is aptly captured in the demise of the Gender Parity and Prohibition of Violence against Women Bill, which was a bill, brought to the floor of the Nigerian House of Senate in March, 2016 by senator, Mrs. Abiodun Olujimi. The bill failed to pass as it was voted down by majority of the law makers. The bill was 'aimed at eliminating the gap between the rights of men and women in Nigeria. It also sought to

put an end to traditional and stereotypical practices that drive discrimination based on gender. In totality, the bill seeks to eliminate discrimination based on gender in the fields of economy, antagonistic treatment of widows, early marriage, women's inheritance rights, politics, education and employment, and also takes a firm stand against domestic and sexual violence against women' (*Vanguard*, March 16, 2016).

Commenting on the non-passage of the bill, Ademola Awolola Ifabunmi, a senator, has this to say: 'Traditionally, women are not equal to men. According to the Yoruba tradition for example, the husband is said to be the owner of the wife; he is the chairman of the home. But it is because some men are becoming lazy economically nowadays that women are now claiming equality with men. Men are above women. God Himself makes women to outnumber them so that men can marry as many women as they desire' (as reported in the *Vanguard*, March 16, 2016).

Echoing the above view is a scholar, Ishaq Akintola, Professor of Islamic Eschatology, activist and social commentator. According to him, 'Many people pretend to be activists, with some claiming to be fighting for the rights of women God has assigned to everyone his or her own roles. Our women have not told us they want to assume the financial responsibilities of the home. They've not said they will stop collecting allowances. So, why the hypocrisy? It is ungodly' (as reported in the *Vanguard*, March 16, 2016).

The president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, is not left out of this debate. His views echoed the patriarchal culture of the Nigerian society. Earlier, the BBC in an interview with the First lady, Mrs. Aisha Buhari, concerning the composition of the President's cabinet, she had responded by saying that 'The president does not know 45 of 50 of the people he appointed and I don't know them either, despite being his wife of 27 years'. She pointed out that: 'Some people are sitting down in their homes, folding their arms only for them to be called to come and head an agency or a ministerial position. If it continues like this, I'm not going to be part of any [re-election] movement', (reported in the BBC, October, 2016).

On a State visit to Germany in March, 2016, the Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari, was asked to comment on his Wife's criticism. Addressing reporters, with German's Chancellor, Angela Merkel (a woman) standing by his side, Buhari blurted out: 'I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen and my living room and the other room' (BBC, 2016). To be sure, his response was apropos of the prevailing patriarchal values prevailing in Africa.

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, but customary and religious laws continue to restrict women's rights, especially in certain areas of the economy. As Nigeria is a federal republic, each has the authority to draft its own legislation. However, any law which is contradictory to Federal Law or the Constitution can be challenged in a Federal Court and cannot subsist. The combination of federation and a tripartite system of civil, customary and religious laws makes it very difficult to harmonize legislation and remove discriminatory practices. Moreover, certain states in Northern Nigeria follow Islamic (Sharia) law. Adherence to Islamic law reinforces customs that are unfavorable to women, including those relating to freedom of movement, marriage and inheritance (Abara, 2012).

Although the subject of this paper is on gender and culture, I am also conscious of the fact that the subject of *gender* is a full-fledged discourse beyond entrepreneurship, transcending and encompassing global, socio-ethno-cultural, institutional, economic, political, religious, psychology and even legal boundaries. Gender features prominently in ethnicity and entrepreneurship development in Kenya (Mungai and Ogot, 2012); in institutional discourses (Buame, 1996), in risk-taking propensity (Bula, 2012); in studies of impact of religion on the seclusion of Northern Muslim women in Nigeria (Yakubu, 2001); in studies of the interrelationship between entrepreneurship and religion (Dodd & Gotsis, 2007; in psychological traits and entrepreneurship development (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). To look at gender and entrepreneurship as if it is a product of variable only at the cultural level of analysis would, however, be bad entrepreneurial analysis in contexts. Socio-cultural, economic, institutional and political factors all coalesced to produce what we may call today, the 'African Entrepreneur and entrepreneurship'.

Runya, Huddleston and Swinney (2006, p. 457) argue that 'women owned businesses are comparatively understudied... In particular, studies about the factors influencing the performance of their businesses are inconclusive and scarce'. The authors point out that 'there has been a call for research that transcends traditional economic measures of success and examines the influence of business styles, strategies and culture on women-owned business'.

Entrepreneurship in Africa has been perceived differently among scholars and researchers. One view, according to Mungai and Ogot (2012) is that there is lack of entrepreneurial talent in Africa which has resulted in fewer establishments and management of manufacturing industries for productive activities. Another view is that entrepreneurial talent is indeed available but that the socio-cultural, economic, financial, political and the institutional environments have not been conducive to allow this talent to develop (Ogbor & Orishede, 2017). This paper adds another view; that the manner in which entrepreneurial theories and practices are gendered is a hindrance for the development of a robust entrepreneurial theory and praxis that is inclusive of both male and female sensibilities. In so doing, it is suggested that the masculine dominated ideas that permeate the theories and the eclipse of feminine qualities when defining and reading entrepreneurship is capable of hindering the development of a sustainable entrepreneurial culture and thus negative national economic development.

Previous studies on gender and entrepreneurship indicate that women had a lower level of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and lower level of entrepreneurial performance (EP) as compared to men (Fay and Williams, 1993; Brush, 1992; Kuada, 2009; Matthews and Moser, 1999; Ogbor, 2000; Omari, 1991). The model of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) suggests that there are five dimensions of EO: autonomy, innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness. The prevailing discourses on entrepreneurship, from the classics to present day theorists, has long associated these five entrepreneurial orientations or traits with *masculinity* and have been seen as the psychological conditions or orientations under which entrepreneurship should be promoted.

Considering the various cultural and structural challenges and obstacles facing women in Africa, it is not unlikely that we may draw the conclusion that women are usually discouraged from venturing into enterprise development (Mungai and Ogot, 2012). First, early socialization practices emphasize the primary role of women as mothers and wives, influencing girls' total expectations for future participation in the labor force and the choice of career paths. Second, an African culture is seen as a barrier to entrepreneurial development because it perpetuates culturally sanctioned biases against women and provides excuses for men (Chitsike, 2000; Chanock, 2015; Heyer, 2016). This, according to some authors, has resulted in lower participation of women in business activities with the notable exception of their participation in the informal sector economy.

Traditionally, cultural ideas on gender often mean that men are seen and see themselves as more instrumental, risk-takers, opportunistic, competitive and committed to business activities and career than women (Eromafuru & Ogor, 2017; Ogor, 2000; Ogor & Orishede, 2017). Thus, men were and still are privileged in terms of social position, career, income and authority as a result of the masculine nature of the African society, with masculine notions, stereotypes, values, beliefs and assumptions.

The argument that cultures should be gender-neutral has been advanced severally. One of the main concepts emphasized in line with this argument is 'creating equal opportunities,' which involves the elimination of structural, institutional and cultural barriers and biases that inhibit women participation in business activities and advancement at workplace (Omari, 1991). In the context of Africa, however, this argument has received scanty responses from both scholars and policy makers. Even where such 'equal participation' laws are enshrined in the constitution, they are rarely adhered to and superseded by customary and religious laws.

Existing research and other studies in the field of entrepreneurship and economic development in the United States and European countries have covered 'gender equality' not only at the workplace, but also in opportunities to venture into entrepreneurship through such policies as equal opportunity programs, various affirmative initiatives and access to credit facilities based on competence and not on gendered practices with discriminatory tendencies. Such non-discriminatory policies tend to bridge the gap between men and women in terms of employment opportunities and job creation. In Africa, not much work in terms of policy or research has been done in the area of gender equality. In fact, efforts to question gender parity or discrimination based on gender are a taboo in some areas as we have seen in the 'Gender Parity bill' discussed earlier in this paper.

Further, much of the evidence on gender-related entrepreneurial activity comes from studies based in United States, North European and Asian countries; the generalizability of their findings in an African setting is somehow tenuous. The relationship between culture and gender and how entrepreneurial discourses are gendered have not been critically examined in the context of Africa. This paper is not only looking at the relationship between culture and gender. Rather, it intends to fill a gap in the extant literature and research on entrepreneurial development in Africa by bringing into the discourse the gendering of entrepreneurial discourse and their effects on praxis. The point of departure is that the present literature and discussions regarding entrepreneurship in Africa seem to ignore the fact that gendered entrepreneurial ideas are socio-culturally, politically, institutionally constructed and imposed upon others in a man-made and manufactured reality.

This paper is a synthesis of earlier studies and recent research on culture and entrepreneurship in terms of which they represent a treatise in cultural theory, entrepreneurship and economic development in two crucial areas: (i) the relationship between cultural values and entrepreneurship in the context of gendered entrepreneurial ideas and its praxis and (ii) the constraints such cultural values and practices may have on the development of entrepreneurship in the context of Africa.

Following the tradition of critical theorists in management and organization studies, a critique of the dominant masculine perspective on entrepreneurship is seen as appropriate as it inspires people especially those engaged in serious research to explore the relationship between illusion, ideology and reality as it stimulates self-reflection in order to free individuals from the restrictions and repression of the established social order and its ideologies (Ogor, 2000). A critique of the existing gender-related literature on entrepreneurship from an African experience of it enables one to become resisting, rather than assenting, spectators and passive readers of entrepreneurial texts, research and practices.

It is essential to offer a critique of an existing mode of theorizing. The reason is that one way through which a discourse (or mode of theorizing) is legitimized is the effects it has on the practical aspects of life (praxis). Sometimes, social theories are manifestations of societal myths and ideology which may be nonsensical to the reality of entrepreneurship on ground (Ogor, 2000). Fay and Williams' (1993) study of women's participation in entrepreneurship shows how widely held perceptions about women have led to gender discrimination when seeking start-up capital. Such discriminatory behavior by loan officers and other practitioners, according to Fay and Williams, may not be, and probably is not, intentional. Rather, the pervasiveness of the social construction of differential gender roles in society is such that it is more likely that discrimination is derived from ideas or knowledge produced in entrepreneurial theories and discourse.

2. Culture and Gendered Entrepreneurial Practices

Studies on the relationship on socio-cultural practices have long privileged and upheld masculine orientations and sensibilities (Brush, 1992; Fay & Williams, 1993; Kuada, 2009; Matthews & Moser, 1999; Ogor, 2000; Omari, 1991). Some of these studies have also drawn the conclusion that socio-cultural and economic constraints facing aspiring women entrepreneurs are a hindrance to becoming one (World Bank, 2018). The gendering of entrepreneurship seems to be more pronounced in Africa than elsewhere (World Bank, 2018). Studies have also shown that this gender parity and discrimination between women and men has accounted for the low rate of businesses established by women in the region and thus the low rate of economic growth compared to other regions in the global economy (World Bank, 2017).

Earlier studies indicate that women are more vulnerable because tradition usually gives them less decision-making power over assets than men, including limited opportunities to engage in remunerated activities, and therefore to acquire their own assets. According to the World Bank, 'while both male and female entrepreneurs face such constraints as a lack of capital, women are specifically impacted by a number of obstacles, such as discrimination and the dearth of collateral. As a result, female-owned enterprises post monthly profits that are on average 38 percent lower than those of male-owned enterprises.' Three factors, according to the World Bank account in part for this underperformance: the lack of capital, the choice of business sector, and commercial practices (World Bank, 2017).

In Africa, writes the World Bank, female entrepreneurs tend to confine themselves to the traditionally female sectors not because of a lack of skills or access to capital, but rather a lack of information and social factors. In another study, the World Bank reports that 'the gap in female entrepreneurship is reinforced by the other gender inequalities such as low financial inclusion of women, the gap in education and legal rights disparities' (Meunier, Krylova & Ramalho, 2017, p. 2). In a different study, International Labor Organization, ILO (1999) found that in patriarchal societies, such as Africa, customary conventions play a major role in determining the socio-economic status and involvement for women in entrepreneurial activities.

Thus, it could be suggested that women and men operate in two separate worlds with quite different value systems when it comes to gender participation in entrepreneurship. Women are expected to act as secretaries, typists, sales girls and cleaners to male-owned firms (Ogbor & Orishede, 2017). Evidence also shows that distinct ethnic groups assume their own behavioral expectations, with some communities emphasizing purely domestic chores for women (passivity in entrepreneurial activities), and for others financial independence for both genders. Still for others, the path to entrepreneurship is reflective of women's frustrations encountered at the domestic front (Nussbaum, 2000; Stichter, 1990).

Pressures from cultural traditions impinge significantly on the economic factors that women face. Such pressures constrain women's mobility; limit whom they talk to, and conduct business with. A study by Chitsike (2000) in Zimbabwe found that some women view making large amounts of money as a dirty pursuit, full of all kinds of evil ('she wants to make money like a prostitute'). With African nations being dominantly patriarchal, the extent to which women are able to freely participate in entrepreneurship activities is largely constrained or determined by the existing cultural atmosphere.

Studies have shown that, specifically in Africa, women are more disadvantaged than men in benefiting from opportunities arising from the dynamics of socio-cultural practices (Mathews and Moser, 1995). Such studies have drawn attention to power inequality in social relations and how this inequality is rooted in the role of 'the woman' in society. Unequal power relations in Africa have thus produced a gendered economic environment which eschews the full participation of women in the process of economic development.

Gender differences and its associated inequality, including their manifestation in economic activities have been explained against a backdrop of a cultural value orientation that privileges masculinity over femininity. In masculine-oriented culture, sex roles in society are clearly defined and it is accepted that there are different for men and different ones for women. Thus, women's early socialization has significantly affected their level of self-confidence, achievement motivation and even their ability to take risk (Brush, 1992; Moribo, 1998; Omari, 1991). Consequently, cultural and social norms which have perpetuated gender inequality in social roles and economic opportunity are seen as some of the obstacles to entrepreneurial development in Africa (Omari, 1991). Thus, gender role is a cultural orientation or attribute conditioned by a traditional social system in which men are expected to behave as men (masculine) and women are expected to think and behave as women (feminine).

The gendered dimensions of the cultural, social, political and institutional environment in Africa are reflected in a number of gender-specific constraints in the context of entrepreneurial development. For example, property laws impose constraints on women, who do not always have the rights to acquire and own property. This practice has significantly limited women's ability to have access to needed capital for business development as they lack property to use as collateral (Ogbor, 2009, Ogbor and Orishede, 2017; World Bank, 2017). Thus, women's access to bank loans is restricted by their limited financial resources and the difficulties they have obtaining the necessary guarantees. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), most financing provided for women has been at the micro and informal level (IFC, 2006). In certain cases, financial institutions demand prior consent of the woman's husband before granting a loan (Abara, 2012).

Constraints resulting from gendered property laws and the practice of confinement due to some religious practices can also impede women to make connections or networks that will become valuable in business development. Cultural values may conflict with women entrepreneurs' need for freedom of movement and a taboo in socializing or even doing business with men. Traditional practices, and in particular the practice of polygamy, customary inheritance and land ownership, perpetuate the differences in the roles and status of men and women, limiting the later to certain roles that are antithetical to entrepreneurship, that is, street hawking, vendor of foodstuff, tailoring, operators of beauty salons, etc. In addition, the traditional practice or privilege accorded the first-male child over the first-female child in business or asset inheritance is also a factor inhibiting or constraining women's venturing into entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, civil code and other types of laws such as customary and Sharia laws, inheritance laws, property laws, credit laws, marriage and divorce laws, commercial codes, agricultural acts, privatization and investment laws offer women scarce protection against discrimination and are examples of practices that are reflective of the socio-cultural, institutional, politico-legal and regulatory environments that impede women entrepreneurial efforts and aspirations to become key economic players in Africa.

As pointed out earlier, studies have indicated that even when constitutions are formally gender-neutral, they might still contain clauses that perpetuate discrimination and, in some cases, allow discriminatory customary and religious

laws to take precedence, canceling out the rights given to women under the constitution. The existence of such constraints to business at various levels and throughout the society has a disproportionately negative impact on women's participation in entrepreneurship (African Development Bank, 2004; Kuada, 2009).

Gendered ideas, practices and discriminations are most glaring in the African economy. Studies have shown that women occupy 21% of non-formal sector positions regardless of their educational qualifications. Those who occupy positions in the formal and civil service sectors are mainly restricted to support service, such as secretaries (Abara, 2012).

In particular, as a result of constraints imposed on women by various cultural and institutional practices, many prospective African women entrepreneurs tend to be in small sector micro enterprises, mainly in the informal sector that permits a dual role as 'woman/mother' in the house and as an 'economic agent' in the market. Attempts at reconciling work/business and family responsibilities serve as constraints to the realization and development of their entrepreneurial aspirations. Women's more demanding role in the family relative to men's also affect their entrepreneurial ability by reducing the time, energy and concentration levels needed for any entrepreneurial activity. The amount of time they have available for entrepreneurial activity is limited by the time necessary to care for the family. Thus, household responsibilities make them risk averse, while societal perceptions affect their treatment when they step beyond their perceived boundaries, limiting their access to the resources required for successful entrepreneurship.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of African women's contributions to make households survive and their dominance of certain sectors, particularly agriculture and textiles, women generally remain marginalized, shut out of the formal economy, or constrained due to other factors such as choice of occupations and businesses that are mainly in small scale farming, textile trading, street hawking, etc. These businesses or types of occupations are relevant as survivalist strategies. Consequently, rather than becoming an 'entrepreneurial woman' the result of discriminatory practices arising from cultural value system has accorded the African woman the unenviable role of the 'Market woman' – a term which women themselves have internalized and used to describe their occupational pedigree.

3. Entrepreneurial Orientation, Culture and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), according to Lumpkin and Dess (1996), is one of the central concepts in the entrepreneurship literature and refers to the configuration of practices, policies, and processes that provide insights into the creation of entrepreneurial actions and decisions.

It has been traditionally noted that entrepreneurship is a product of psychological traits or entrepreneurial orientation (EO) inherent in individual entrepreneurs. Such entrepreneurial orientations or traits have been noted in the literature to include: 'motives', 'drives', 'achievement orientation', 'risk taking propensity', 'autonomy', 'proactiveness', 'competitive aggressiveness', and 'innovativeness', including the drive to pursue ones' spirit of entrepreneurship. These entrepreneurial orientations have been explained by some researchers as products of psychology or they are psychologically determined – psychological determinism (Erden, 1992; McClelland, 1961; Saffold, 1988; Tiessen, 1987). However, 'orientation,' whatever its ambiguities, is at one and the same time a psychological and socio-cultural concept – referring both to a felt advantage of an individual or a group's social construction of reality.

For instance, although the psychological theories of entrepreneurial supply have individual personality as their common focus of study, research has also indicated that these entrepreneurial traits or entrepreneurial orientations (EO) can be shaped or conditioned by particular socio-cultural practices, including religion and institutional arrangements (Buame, 1996; Carswell and Rolland, 2004; Dana, 2009; Kaye & Hassan, 2011; Dodd & Gotsis, 2007; Ogbor, 2000; Robinson, Stimpson, Heufner & Hunt, 1991). Research has also shown that some ethnic or social groups in the same country may have a cultural and a psychological propensity towards entrepreneurship than others (Kayed and Hassan, 2011; Percy, 2010).

In research on entrepreneurial orientation, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) consider five dimensions: (i) risk taking, (ii) proactiveness, (iii) competitive aggressiveness, (iv) autonomy, and (v) innovativeness. These five dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation remained the well acknowledged dimensional aspects of EO (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Hughes & Morgan, 2007). Accordingly, this study assesses how culture interacts with these five EO dimensions in determining how entrepreneurial ideas and practices are gendered and the implication for female entrepreneurial development.

Before we start with this discussion, it is perhaps in order to note that the early theories on entrepreneurship (from Schumpeter, 1934 to Collins & Moore 1966) were the product of male writers looking at entrepreneurship from the masculine lens.

3.1. Risk Taking and Entrepreneurship

Some researchers have investigated whether certain entrepreneurial orientations or personality traits such as risk propensity and innovativeness motivate entrepreneurial activities (Palich & Bagby, 1995; Thomas, 2004). Researchers who adopt the trait approach propose that risk taking propensity directly affects the tendency to become entrepreneurial, assuming that entrepreneurial individuals tend to have a 'higher overall tolerance for risk' (Baron, 2004, p. 224) than non-entrepreneurs.

Douglas and Shepherd (2002) found that the intention to be self-employed is stronger for those with more positive attitudes to risk and to independence. That is, the higher the individual's tolerance for risk, and the stronger is their preference for decision-making autonomy, the stronger is their intention to be self-employed. Risk reflects the degree of uncertainty and potential loss associated with the outcomes which may follow from a given behavior or a set of behaviors (Forlani & Mullins, 2000). Entrepreneurs' propensity to take risk may also be related to risk perception. While estimating the riskiness of the situation, the decision-maker forms some beliefs about future outcomes.

3.2. Proactiveness

Proactiveness is understood as 'acting in anticipation of future problems, needs or changes' (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, p. 142) and it is crucial to entrepreneurial orientation (EO) because it suggests a forward-looking perspective that is accompanied by innovative or new-venturing activity. Proactiveness is the ability to make things happen, to predict the future in order to act on it and be able to control it. This orientation is fundamentally different from cultures where majority of the people are apathetic, passive and submissive, uninvolved, unassertive, non-participating. Such a culture approximates what Hofstede (1980/1984) calls 'high uncertainty avoidance culture'. Such a culture only act (react) to events – people wait for things to happen before they can act. Such cultures also emphasize the role of fate and divine willingness and divine intervention (*Isha Allah* in Hausa euphemism) in all aspects of life, including business activities. Indeed, proactiveness concerns the importance of initiative in the entrepreneurial process. Although, proactiveness is an EO construct, which is a psychological variable, it is nevertheless a cultural construct. Hofstede's (1980/1984) cultural dimensions in terms of the degree of uncertainty avoidance in a society determines the extent of the society's degree of proactiveness and the willingness to take risks. Proactiveness, the belief that one can control the future and the propensity for risk-taking and so on, belong to low uncertainty avoidance cultures such as the US. This explains why the notion of entrepreneurship and its contiguous terms are related to masculine virtues associated with and rooted in the US culture. Proactiveness, according to Lumpkin and Dess refers to a firm's efforts to seize new opportunities. Proactive organizations monitor trends, identify the future needs of existing customers, and anticipate changes in demand or emerging problems that can lead to new venture opportunities. Proactiveness involves not only recognizing changes but also being willing to act on those insights ahead of the competition. Strategic managers who practice proactiveness have their eye on the future in a search for new possibilities for growth and development Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

3.3. Competitive Aggressiveness

Competitive aggressiveness refers to a firm's efforts to outperform its industry rivals. Companies with an aggressive orientation are willing to 'do battle' with competitors. It refers to the type of intensity and head-to-head posturing that new entrants often need to compete with existing rivals (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). They might slash prices and sacrifice profitability to gain market share, or spend aggressively to obtain manufacturing capacity. As an avenue of firm development and growth, competitive aggressiveness may involve being very assertive in leveraging the results of other entrepreneurial activities such as innovativeness or proactiveness (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005, p. 151). There are several strategies firms can use to compete aggressively in order to enhance entrepreneurial position and gain competitive advantage over rival firms. Dess and Lumpkin (2005, p. 151) mention two of those strategies which include: (i) entering markets with drastically lower prices. However, entrepreneurs have the fear that the entry of resource-rich large firms into their marketplace can negatively affect their competitiveness and (ii) copying the business practices or techniques of successful competitors. Although, this is called 'imitation', it may also be used to take business from competitors. As long as the idea or practice is not protected by intellectual property laws, it is not illegal (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005).

3.4. Autonomy

Autonomy represents an individual's independent action and self-direction in search of a new opportunity (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin & Frese (2009) found a positive relationship between a firm's performance and autonomous attitude. Autonomy extends beyond having decisional freedoms to self-awareness, knowing what one's dreams and aims are, and acting on those dreams and aims. Research on entrepreneurial motivation shows that it is not financial gain, but autonomy that is most often mentioned or rated as the most important motive for starting a business (Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003; van Gelderen & Jansen, 2006).

Lumpkin & Dess (1996) suggest that many of the best ideas for new corporate ventures come from the 'bottom-up.' In some organizations, even the best ideas are not welcomed by top management. Therefore, within many corporations, extra effort and special incentives may be needed to develop and build support for an entrepreneurial venture. Autonomy and a degree of freedom can create room for creativity and innovativeness. Many successful entrepreneurs abstain from too much control of employees. They provide them with a degree of autonomy, to take initiatives and responsibility for their actions

3.5. Innovativeness

Innovativeness Based on Schumpeter' (1934) early work, the concept of entrepreneurs as innovators is accepted in the literature. Innovativeness is an indicator of a firm's tendency to engage in and support new ideas, processes and creative methods. This type of activity may result in new processes, services or technologies (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Though the bulk of the extant innovation literature has focused on technology, innovation can occur in many areas. This includes management processes, promotion, human resources, visual merchandising, and other aspects of running a small business. These are all areas where a firm or small business owner could employ innovative techniques to improve the performance of their business. Innovation is an important aspect of EO as it reflects the means by which firms might pursue new opportunities (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) Innovativeness Based on Schumpeter' (1934) early work, the concept of entrepreneurs as innovators is accepted in the literature. Innovativeness is an indicator of a firm's tendency to engage in and support new ideas, processes and creative methods. This type of activity may result in new processes, services or technologies (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Though the bulk of the extant innovation literature has focused on technology, innovation can occur in many areas. This includes management processes, promotion, human resources, visual merchandising, and other aspects of running a small business. These are all areas where a firm or small business owner

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The idea of innovativeness in the discourse on entrepreneurship was first introduced by Schumpeter (1934). Innovativeness is seen as an indicator of a firm's tendency to engage in and support new ideas, processes and creative methods (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001)). As one of the major components of an entrepreneurial strategy, innovativeness can be seen as a willingness to support creativity and experimentation in introducing new products and services, novelty, technological leadership and R & D in developing new products or new processes. Although, innovations may vary according to the degree of 'radicalness' (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001; Hughes & Morgan, 2007; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005).), innovativeness represents a basic willingness to find methods that differ from existing technologies or practices and venture beyond the current state of the art (Hughes & Morgan, 2007).

Although nearly all the research and literature on entrepreneurship and innovations assumed technology as the major area of innovativeness, innovation can occur in many ways and areas of a firm's value chain: management process, marketing, human resources, production, distribution and service. These are all areas where a firm or an entrepreneur can employ innovative techniques to improve firm performance in its chosen market and gain competitive advantage (Runya, Huddleston & Swinney, 2006, p. 470).

In creating and introducing new products and technologies, innovative firms can generate extraordinary firm performance and have even been described as the engines of economic growth (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1995). Research has also shown that firm innovativeness has a positive influence on firm performance and enhances the firm's competitive advantage (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001; Hughes & Morgan, 2007;

4. The Cultural Relativity of Eo Dimensions and the Gendering of Entrepreneurship

The relationship between the above dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation or psychological traits and gender can now be presented as follow:

First, entrepreneurship theory seems to uphold that the level of affiliation, empathy, sense of belongingness, and association are more pronounced in societies that are feminine than those that are more masculine. The latter seems to privilege a sense of individualism than belongingness or collectivity (Collins & Moore, 1964; Hofstede, 1989; Ogbor, 2000). Thus, the gendered idea seems to imply that because women prefer to be associated with a sense of belonging, they tend to lack that spirit of individualism or autonomy and competitive aggressiveness that are seen as essential for entrepreneurship. It needs to be noted that the need for affiliation in the context of gender and aspiration seems to be conspicuously absent in the extant literature in the discourse of entrepreneurship and why some nations or regions such as the Scandinavian countries and Germany that are feminine in culture are highly developed. This is an area that needs to be further examined in detail.

Second, studies have shown that men are more autonomous; more tolerance for ambiguity, have more risk-taking propensity, more proactive and more aggressive than their female counterparts. Collins and Moore (1964, pp. 5-6) argue that, 'However we may personally feel about the entrepreneur, he emerges as more masculine than feminine, more heroic than cowardly. ... His values and activities have become part of the American and intimately related to our ideas of personal freedom, success, and above all, individualism'.

Thus, the tendency to conceive of entrepreneurship *after the masculine sensibility has gone as long as the work has*. Thus, a consistent empirical result emerging from the literature on female entrepreneurship indicates how consent is secured in terms of which gendered ideas are manufactured and the way consent is attested to, including the manufactured strategies in which feminine equation of gender relations are pushed to the shadow economy (Eromafuru & Ogbor, 2017; Ogbor, 2009; Omari, 1991).

Gendered entrepreneurial practices affect women participation in entrepreneurship in a negative way. Furthermore, Gustafson (1998) validated the above line of thinking by arguing that 'gender structures, reflected in gendered ideology and gendered practice, give rise to systematic gender differences in the perception of risk' (p. 805).

One thing that emerges from studying the various theories embedded in the discourse on entrepreneurship is the realization that scholarly objectivity is a myth: everyone has his or her own bias and ideology, which results in a different interpretation of the concept of entrepreneurship. However, masculine ideas and biases have won the debate so far. If researchers such as Gustafson (1998) and Ogbor (2000) have their way, the conventional masculine discourse on entrepreneurship would be knocked off its comfortable seat and takes its place alongside other social discourses that are more gender-neutral.

Studies have also indicated that "The males are more forward-looking and opportunity-seeking in anticipation of a future demand than the females. Philistia, Bwisa & Kihoro, 2012, p. 69) suggest that "The multiple responsibilities which women keep as home keeper and entrepreneur serve as obvious reasons for her shortcomings in being proactive'. The idea here is that men are more proactive and innovative. In a typical patriarchal society, it is the belief that women are expected to be a helper or subordinate to man. This attitude denies her the freedom and the will to achieve her personal goals which may come through training and skill acquisition.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This section deals with a brief summary of issues raised in this paper, the conclusions derived from the study and recommendations/suggestions in term of cultural change, cultural re-orientation and re-programming.

Summary in Africa has been perceived differently among scholars and researchers. One view is that there is lack of entrepreneurial talent in Africa which has resulted in fewer establishments and management of manufacturing industries for productive activities. Another view is that entrepreneurial talent is indeed available but that the economic, financial, political and the institutional environments have not been conducive to allow this talent to develop.

Previous studies on gender and entrepreneurship indicate that women had a lower level of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and lower level of entrepreneurial performance (EP) as compared to men. The model of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) suggests that there are five dimensions of EO: risk taking, proactiveness, autonomy, innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness. These dimensions or traits are commonly associated with masculinity and are seen as the psychological conditions or orientations promoting entrepreneurship.

Earlier studies indicate that women are more vulnerable because tradition usually gives them less decision-making power over assets than men, while at the same time their opportunities to engage in remunerated activities, and therefore to acquire their own assets, are more limited.

Traditional practices, and in particular the practice of polygamy, customary inheritance and land ownership, perpetuate the differences in the roles and status of men and women, limiting the later to certain roles that are antithetical to entrepreneurship

Civil code and other types of laws such as customary and Sharia laws, inheritance laws, property laws, credit laws, marriage and divorce laws, commercial codes, agricultural acts, privatization and investment laws offer women scarce protection against discrimination and are examples of practices that are reflective of the socio-cultural, institutional, politico-legal and regulatory environments that impede women entrepreneurial efforts and aspirations to become key economic players in Africa.

Barriers to women entrepreneurial development include limited access to collateral, and thus access to credit for business expansion; social and cultural norms that discourage women from entering into certain areas of economic activities or business; prejudice, discrimination and lack of opportunities that discourage and limit women from entering into business; a low level of confidence and self-esteem on the part of some women; women's dual roles of productive and reproductive work, and combined responsibilities relating to enterprise management and domestic responsibilities. Existing research indicates that men are more autonomous; more tolerance for ambiguity, have more risk-taking propensity; more proactive, more aggressive and more innovative than their female counterparts.

Gendered idea seems to imply that because women prefer to be associated with a sense of belonging, they tend to lack that spirit of autonomy and individualism that is essential for entrepreneurship.

5.1. Conclusion

Much of the literature and research on African entrepreneurship seems to suggest that entrepreneurial practice, once it has been culturally programmed into people's behavioral pattern, is hard to change. This approach to studying and practicing entrepreneurship within a cultural context seems to be overtly deterministic. Culture is not as static or 'enduring' as it seems to be presented in cultural discourses. In fact, the popular euphemism about 'change is constant' seems to be more applicable to the phenomenon of culture than in any other sphere of social life. Culture is always in transition and with it, changes in attitudes and values. This is precisely what is going on in most parts of the world as 'anti-capitalist cultures' are re-programmed to become 'pro-capitalist cultures' through cultural intervention. Examples are the proliferations of entrepreneurial education and support policies in societies that were once seen as 'backward societies'.

In the early and late sixties, McClelland and his associates (McClelland, 1961; McClelland and Winters, 1969), tried in their attempts to 'motivate economic achievement' in countries whose cultures were not in sync with the 'spirit of capitalism' with various training and 'cultural intervention' programs. Specifically, it was 'established' that India, with its Hindu culture (which privileges spiritualism and fate or life determinism), was doomed to a society of poverty. Today, India has emerged as a veritable player in the global economy, thanks to a concerted and systematic effort in cultural change whereby the spirit of entrepreneurship and capitalism has been inculcated in the Hindustan mind. As a consequence, the prevailing culture of 'spirit of Hinduism' has given way to Weber's 'spirit of capitalism.' India's transformation to a vibrant capitalist and entrepreneurial society is rooted in the gradual and guided discontinuity of its predominant Hindustan culture brought about by training and cultural re-programming. Today, India no more preaches nor export the religious doctrines embodied in Hinduism. India is now home to one of the best and modern healthcare systems in the world, producing and exporting more medical doctors than any other country in the world.

In a similar manner, China, formerly known as the sleeping giant, and was once waved aside as a communist enclave with inward-looking development strategy has now become the second largest economy in the world. This feat was achieved thanks to a process that went through ideological synthesis. In her approach to adopt a socio-cultural and politico-economic change in the context of a policy of gradualism, China adopted Western educational system coupled with training in entrepreneurship. Today, China no longer exports communist ideology to developing and poor countries, but western-type of commodities – vehicles, electronics, engineering, etc.

In terms of cultural values and entrepreneurial orientation, the United States of America is arguably the most masculine society in the Western world (Hofstede, 1980). Not surprisingly, it was from the US that the idea of entrepreneurship as a masculine ethos emerged. Today, however, the United States is producing more women entrepreneurs than men thanks to equal opportunity laws and affirmative action programs.

The above three examples from India, China and the United States indicate phenomena of cultural intervention, change and discontinuity. In the case of India, change in the culture is brought about by education and training. In the case of China, the spirit of entrepreneurship is brought about through a re-orientation of political, social and economic ideologies. And, in the case of the United States, cultural change and discontinuity is brought about by, on the one hand, education, and by the other, laws such as affirmative action and equal opportunity laws and programs designed to eradicate centuries of repressive cultural and institutional practices which had worked against female entrepreneurs.

Thus, although culture is a way that people are culturally programmed, this 'mental programming' can be re-programmed to support modern entrepreneurial conditions. In addition to training, change in 'attitudes', 'reflexes' and values can also be enforced through laws and other forms of legislations. The US examples of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity programs are some of the strategies successive US governments have adopted to promote entrepreneurship among women and other disadvantaged social groups in a culture that was overtly masculine, discriminatory and known for its culture of segregation. In the process, the proverbial 'glass ceiling', which has once worked against women advancement in various spheres of life, especially in occupation and career advancement was broken.

5.2. Recommendations/Suggestions

Cultural discontinuity and reprogramming, as part of cultural change, is not new in Africa as the continent has been experiencing all sort of cultural discontinuity – in religion, politics, arts, architecture, education, entertainment, economics and business, etc. The African culture has embraced the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal religion systems, Western-styled political culture, Oxford/Cambridge/Harvard education culture, MTV-youth culture, CNN, McDonald's, Hollywood, Levi Strauss cultures in their symbolic inducements without a concomitant embrace of their substance – the cultural value system in which they are made meaningful.

As Tshikuku (2001, p. 3) points out, Africa is in transition and 'in this transition, the attitudes, reflexes, choices, and the values that support them, remain tragically ambiguous and ambivalent. The socio-cultural systems are nevertheless not fixed.' What is needed, as the examples of India, China and the US indicate, is a 'guided transition' or 'cultural re-programming' – one in which the attitudes, reflexes, and values are supportive of modern entrepreneurship. It is not enough to accept the symbolism of a culture; to make any difference, the substance of the culture must be equally adopted. Adoption of a cultural ideal without a change in cultural values and attitudes is a futile exercise in terms of entrepreneurial development.

We cannot afford to overlook the role female entrepreneurs play in the development of a nation's economy. For example, the World Bank points out that 'Gender gaps in female business entry and ownership are associated with substantial losses to national income and economic development at both the national and regional levels' (Meunier, Krylova and Ramalho and the World Bank, 2017, p. 8).

The importance of female entrepreneurship for economic development is widely recognized. Numerous studies demonstrate the positive impact of female entrepreneurs on economic growth and development, as well as sustainable and durable peace (Cuberes and Teignier 2014; Fetsch, Jackson, and Wiens 2015). Moreover, economies characterized by high levels of female entrepreneurial activity are more resilient to financial crises and experience economic slowdowns less frequently (Global Entrepreneurship Research Association 2017, p. 29)

Women's economic empowerment is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2016 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment provides strong evidence that women are lagging behind men in terms of the number of female business owners, the size of women-owned businesses, and their access to economic resources. Specifically, women-owned enterprises are smaller and disadvantaged in their access to credit, resources, and assets (UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment 2016, 2).

These problems are more pronounced in African countries. Except in a very few countries that have adopted change in cultural attitudes such as Ghana, Africa still lags behind woefully in development. Here, culture and other indigenous practices must be implicated, including the attitudes of African leaders as indicated in the introduction to this paper about the killing of the 'Gender Parity Bill' right on the floor of the Nigerian Senate by the elected senators, the leaders.

Individuals in society at large must also rise to the occasion and break out of the socio-cultural web in which they are tied. Aspiring African female entrepreneurs need training in entrepreneurship with new infrastructures and new mind-set. There is nothing inherently wrong in going to church and worshipping God. However, the knowledge of a business about its future is less likely to be gained through seeking the advice of a spiritualist than in engaging in feasibility study and producing a sound business plan. Similarly, going to a traditional witch doctor or engaging the services of a 'prayer warrior' for spiritual intervention in order to prevent a business from failure obscures the reality and real reasons for business failure.

As consistently argued in this paper, entrepreneurial practices and the theories on which it is premised seems to privilege the masculine ethos over the feminine ones through the use of certain language over others. Concepts such as aggressiveness, assertiveness, competition, independence, high level of individualism, autonomy, achievement orientation, risk taking propensity, etc. are ideally masculine in nature. On the other hand, concepts such as nurturance, sense of belonging, communality, cooperation, etc. are feminine in nature and presented in the discourse as antithetical to the spirit of entrepreneurship. To me, this is wrong. Some of the most economically developed economies in the world such as the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway) including Germany are classified in Hofstede's cultural

dimensions with a high degree of femininity and egalitarianism. Their economic development in the midst of feminism is a subject that is worth further research.

One of the major conclusions from this study is that although gender differences in behavior might be caused by gender differences in entrepreneurial orientation preferences or traits (which are psychologically given), they might also be caused by situational socio-cultural, especially the subjective perspective in which female business owners are seen and the way entrepreneurial discourses and praxis are culturally gendered. The options provided to females and the advice they receive are rooted in the way female entrepreneurs are defined in a masculine dominated society with its patriarchal orientation. Numerous theoretical and practical reasons support the generation of greater knowledge about the influences of socio-cultural and personality characteristics between females and males on decision-making in the context of entrepreneurial development. This paper suggests that the study of gender differences may be complimented with studies on how gendered entrepreneurial ideas are manufactured and used as instruments for the suppression of female entrepreneurial initiatives.

Sometimes (or perhaps most of the time), the words we speak or write about something (discourses of an object) serves as arena for action and the theories and practices of entrepreneurship and the manner in which the ideas have been gendered is not an exception.

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