

## **Entrepreneurial Gender Factor in Self-employment Success in Kitui County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Entrepreneurship is about transforming ideas into economic opportunities decisively and it is considered as a driver of economic growth, development and sustainability. It is in record that economic progress has been significantly advanced by pragmatic and resilient individuals who have enterprising and innovative skills. Entrepreneurship is apparently contributing significantly to global, regional and local acceleration in growth and development. Entrepreneurship in Kenya is hinged on the potent role it plays in business start up and take off for self-employment, job creation and earnings. This study established influence of enterprising gender factor on self-employment success in Kitui County in consideration of cultural background, education level, age and marital status of women and men. The study used mixed research design approach with total respondents for the study being two hundred and forty-seven. Questionnaires and semi structured interviews were used to collect data. Findings from the study were presented in figures and tables. The findings demonstrated that cultural background, education level, age and marital status have influence on the success of self-employed businesses in Kitui County. Results from inferential statistics demonstrated that the combined effect of cultural background, education level, age and marital status had significant effect in explaining changes in entrepreneurial success of self-employment.

Key words; Entrepreneurial, Gender Factor, Self-Employment, Success

### **1.0 Background and Research Gap**

Entrepreneurship based on gender has been identified as a driver of women's economic productivity, growth, employment and innovation. This has led to its acceptance as a key and enabling aspect of economic dynamism and flexibility. The decisive issue of entrepreneurship is conversion and transformation of realistic ideas into economic opportunities. Hisrich, (2005) notes that economic entrepreneurial progress has been significantly advanced by pragmatic and realistic entrepreneurs who are innovative and resilient despite associated risks.

Entrepreneurship in both economic and social development has been underrated in the society over the years. However, it has recently become increasingly apparent that this practice contributes to economic development in several spheres. Women entrepreneurship and idea is a recent phenomenon since until the 1980's little was known about entrepreneurship in respect of women both in research and practice since most focus was on the male gender.

A study by Orser and Dyke (2009) on 326 entrepreneurs and 545 corporate managers

explored each individual's personal cognitive abilities and constructs of success and in their conclusion noted that most of the studies on management more often excluded personal measures of success and therefore generally reported that women achievement levels were lower than men. Perks and Struwig, (2005); Perks and Struwig, (2005); Praag and Versloot, (2007) note that the question about the determination of success in corporate firms is well researched but similar studies on entrepreneurship, are rare. This study therefore sought to fill the existing research gap of identifying whether the gender factor is an influencer in entrepreneurship success in Kenya.

### **1.1 Entrepreneurial Gender Factor in Self Employment Success**

Entrepreneurship as process that involving a willingness to rejuvenate and improve innovation, market offerings, risks taking in trying out of new and uncertain products, services, markets and being more proactive towards exploring new business opportunities supports small and medium enterprises (Covin and Slevin, 2007). The gender factor in entrepreneurial success in business organizations is pegged on a multiplicity of reasons for instance employee satisfaction, profitability, productivity, social responsibility, growth and ability to cope up with the ever changing internal and external environment. Jones & George, (2009) note that performance has been traditionally conceptualized in terms of financial measures with some scholars proposing broader performance incorporating non-financial measures. Headd, 2002; Lau, et al., (2007) appreciates that success is different in the perspective of every entrepreneur and can indicated through social status, social recognition, perceived career achievement, and career satisfaction). Some entrepreneurs fail due to lack of personnel, finances, personal reasons, and or social reasons.

Entrepreneurs success can be measured by social recognition as this gauges the success of their business rather than on the basis of income alone (Lau et al., 2007). Richardson, (2004) notes that failure has propelled some of the most successful entrepreneurs into empire status something "they would never have been...if they had given up easily". Entrepreneurship has been recognized as the engine of economic growth and the wheel that pedals the vehicle of economic development in the area of revenue generation, poverty alleviation, job creation, and wealth creation. Wang, Walker and Redmond, (2006) notes that entrepreneurship has been recognized as a significant contributor to economic growth and employment.

The entrepreneurial sector despite the challenges has great potential for increased employment and opportunities creation (Miller et al., 2003), with many entrepreneurs failing and others surviving beyond infancy and adolescence and therefore becoming major success stories through creating wealth for the founders and jobs for the local communities within the vicinity (Thornhill and Amit, 2003). An effort has been done by to identify the main and immediate determinants of new ventures success and or failure through a comprehensive list of the factors that play a critical role (Pretorius et al, 2005).

There has been suggestions that business growth dynamics remains undefined and thus a black box (Dockel and Ligthelm, 2005), with others arguing that enterprise success is a function of

internal and external factors (Markman and Baron, 2003).

## Research Objective

The objective of this study was to establish entrepreneurial gender factor in self-employment success in kitui county, kenya

### 2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design and according to According to Kothari (2004), descriptive survey design includes surveys and fact finding inquiries of different kinds. And is also conducted to describe what people currently believe and what people are doing at the moment (Baumgartner, Strong and Hensley, 2002).

#### 2.1.1 Target Population

The target population was all self-employed entrepreneurs in the county as per table 1 below. According to Kitui county government there are six key business segments which contribute more than 50% of the county government revenue from taxes and levies.

**Table 1: Target Population**

Type of Business	Number	Percent
Retail shops	8280	72%
Wholesale shops	387	3%
Timber merchants	186	2%
Beauty parlors	682	6%
Manufacturing business	121	1%
Livestock business	1890	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11546</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Kitui County Business Licensing Department

#### 2.1.1 Sampling Strategy

This study applied stratified and simple random techniques where 384 respondents were selected from the various business types as shown in figure 1 below.

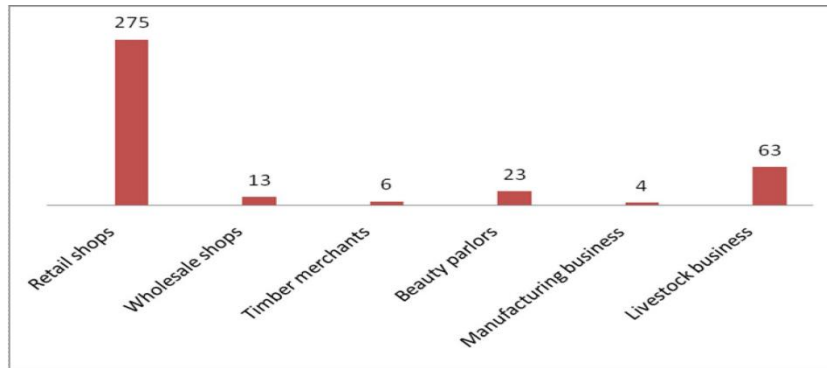


Figure 2:Sample Matrix

## 2.1 Data Collection instruments and procedure

### 2.1.1 Procedure for data collection

This study used primary data which was collected through use of a questionnaires consisting of both open and close ended questions. The questionnaires were dropped and picked later. Respondents to self-administered questionnaires are relatively unlikely to answer questions to please (Mark et al., 2003). Where additional information was required by the researcher, semi-structured interviews were conducted.

### 2.2.2 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

There searcher employed construct validity as advocated by Cronbach (1955), in which it related the measuring instrument to the general theoretical framework with reliability being ascertained through the most common internal consistency measure known as Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) with a threshold of 0.6.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

The multiple linear regression model was as laid below.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e$$

Where:

$\beta_0$ = the Y intercept

Y = Self employment Success

$X_1$  = Cultural background

$X_2$  = Education Level

$X_3$  = Age

$X_4$  = Marital Status

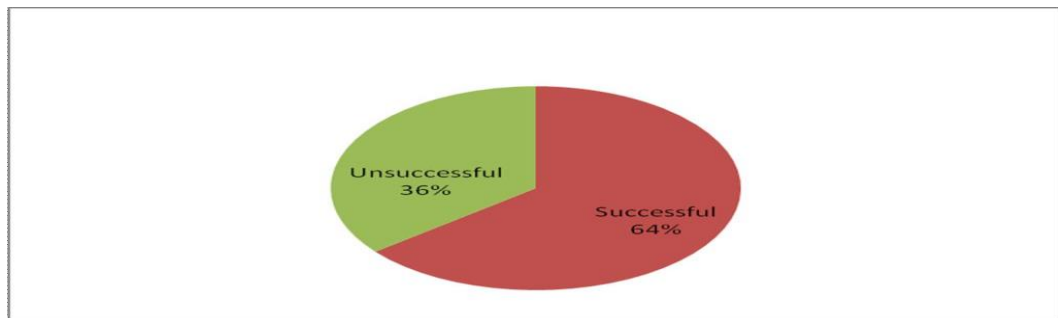
e= error term

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

#### 1.1 Response Rate

Figure 2 explains that out of a sample size of 384 respondents who were issued with the questionnaires, 247 questionnaires were returned making a response rate of 64%, which is supported by Babbie (2004), who asserted that return rate of 50% is acceptable to analyze

**Figure 2: Response Rate**



#### 3.1.1 Cultural Background and Self Employment Success

Respondents level of agreement to specific statements relating to cultural factors as an influence to self-employment success by women entrepreneurs are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Cultural Background and Self-employment success by women entrepreneurs**

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Performance of self employed women entrepreneurs is affected by their childhood social orientation against women	8.5%	4.9%	5.3%	62.8%	18.6%
Family friends support has boosted the morale and productivity of self employed women and men entrepreneurs	5.3%	1.6%	4.0%	35.2%	53.8%
Performance of self employed women entrepreneurs is negatively affected by their household chores	12.1%	13.4%	6.9%	44.5%	23.1%

Performance of self employed women entrepreneurs depends on their ethnic background	7.3%	16.2%	6.1%	31.6%	38.9%
Self-employed Female entrepreneurs are fairly given chances where men predominate	8.9%	11.7%	10.5%	34.0%	34.8%

The findings in Table 2 demonstrate that 62.8 % of the respondents agreed that the performance of women entrepreneurs is affected by their childhood orientation which signifies the need to have women oriented early in entrepreneurship which will help them in self-employment as they grow older. 53.8 % of the respondents agreed that family and friends’ support boosted the morale and productivity of both women and men who are self-employed with an implication that entrepreneurship productivity can be determined by family and friends. House hold chores for the female entrepreneurs disrupts the capacity of women entrepreneurs and thus affecting the performance negatively, with a slight inclination that the performance of women entrepreneurs is determined by their ethnic background. Men and women entrepreneurs did not seem to enjoy any significant difference with 34% agreeing and 34.8 % strongly agreeing in respect of the chances provided and therefore suggesting a level playing ground for the businesses.

### 3.1.2 Education Level and Self Employment Success

Table 3. Education Level and Self-employment success by women entrepreneurs

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Self employed women entrepreneurs with University undergraduate degrees perform better in their businesses than those without degrees	10.9%	16.6%	13.0%	31.6%	27.9%
Self employed women Entrepreneurs with University postgraduate degrees perform better in their businesses than those with only undergraduate degrees or without degrees	8.5%	12.1%	9.3%	30.8%	39.3%
Education is key factor in success of self employed women entrepreneurs	4.0%	8.9%	8.9%	32.4%	45.7%
Self-employed women entrepreneurs require more	2.8%	8.9%	17.8%	44.5%	25.9%

training than men entrepreneurs  
to perform better in their business

Table 3 above demonstrates that the majority of the self-employed women entrepreneurs with university degrees either at bachelor’s level and or postgraduate perform better than those without. This therefore means that higher education is a motivator in running and managing enterprises. The study as well found that education and training was an essential factor for the success of the self-employed entrepreneurs. This therefore suggests that entrepreneurs need continuous education and training.

### 3.1.3 Age and Self Employment Success

Table 4: Age and Self-employment success by women entrepreneurs

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Young female self-employed entrepreneurs below the age of 40 years are better performers and managers than their counterparts who are above 40 years	8.1%	20.6%	7.3%	47.0%	17.0%
Older female self-employed entrepreneurs who are above 40 years tend to require more training especially in technology, than younger ones in order to perform better in their businesses	7.3%	11.3%	7.3%	48.2%	25.9%
Young female self-employed entrepreneurs have more family commitments due to young children and hence it slows their business growth	5.7%	8.5%	4.9%	60.7%	20.2%
As long as female self-employed entrepreneurs are well trained and exposed age doesn’t matter in business	4.0%	14.6%	10.1%	49.0%	22.3%
The more the years a female self-employed entrepreneur has served in business the more she becomes successful	3.6%	14.2%	5.3%	50.6%	26.3%

The findings in table 4 illustrate that the young female entrepreneurs performed better than the elderly ones, with the elderly ones requiring more training in technology. The findings as well indicate that the young female entrepreneurs had more family commitments than the elderly ones, with experience in the business being a key factor to success due to experience. It was also found that training and experience contributed to the success of the business despite the age of the female entrepreneurs.

### 3.1.4 Marital Status and Self Employment Success

Table 5: Marital and Self-employment success by women entrepreneurs

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
Success of women and men in self-employed entrepreneurship is affected by their marital status	6.5%	8.9%	6.9%	54.7%	23.1%
Married self-employed entrepreneurs prosper faster than single self-employed entrepreneurs	10.9%	6.1%	18.2%	18.2%	46.6%
Female self-employed entrepreneurs with more children tend to work extra hard than those with only one child.	7.7%	11.3%	11.7%	32.4%	36.8%
Female self-employed entrepreneurs from polygamist background struggle to grow in their business than those from monogamist background	6.5%	17.8%	6.5%	45.7%	23.5%
Divorced female self-employed entrepreneurs are more successful than married ones	6.9%	20.6%	3.2%	42.1%	27.1%
Widowed self-employed entrepreneurs are more successful than married ones	10.5%	14.6%	5.7%	47.4%	21.9%



Table 4 above findings indicate that the success of women and men in entrepreneurship is affected by their marital status, with those in marriage prospering faster. The number of children each entrepreneur has affected the business positively with those with many children working harder than those without. The findings as well indicate that the female entrepreneurs from polygamous background struggle to grow their businesses. The study also found that the divorced female and the widowed entrepreneurs are more successful than married ones.

#### **4.0 Summary and Conclusions**

The findings of the study suggested that cultural back ground, age, education levels as well as marital status play key roles in determining the success of self-employment by women entrepreneurs with marital status being a limiting factor for women to effectively engage in self-employed entrepreneurship success

##### **The study recommends that there is a need for;**

- Sensitization of community members to develop a positive cultural outlook towards self-employed women entrepreneurs.
- Female entrepreneurs to seek trainings through formal education as it builds their knowledge base and potential in their business success
- Sensitization of the community to change its attitude to those successful self-employed married women entrepreneurs.

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