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Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs and Strategies Adopted by Women Entrepreneurs to Ensure Small Business Success in Nkonkobe Municipality, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The operations of women entrepreneurs are not well understood and have rarely been addressed internationally. The aim of this paper is to establish a base level of understanding of the operational core values of women entrepreneurs in Nkonkobe Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province. Survey was conducted on 50 women entrepreneurs. Data analysis included Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), using descriptive statistics as the statistical tool. The findings from previous literature revealed that there are obstacles faced in the operations of women entrepreneurs. The field survey confirmed some of the operational challenges which are discussed in the paper. The findings also identified the search for solutions to the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the developing countries by providing an insight for further research regarding the institutional weaknesses and policy issues. The implications of the findings are that unless the limitations named above are resolved, the role of women entrepreneurs in the developing nations will continue to experience deprived economic growth, development and display substandard competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The entrepreneurship sector is mainly dominated by males. However, studies conducted recently show that there is an increase in the number of females starting their businesses (Forbes 2013). The World Bank reveals that approximately half of the world's economic growth in the last decade can be attributed to the contributions of female entrepreneurs (Coughlin and Thomas 2002). It is also estimated that women entrepreneurs occupy more than 50 percent of the entrepreneurship sector in South East Asia (Coughlin and Thomas 2002). The International Labour Organisation (2008) reveals that women-owned businesses play a specific role in stimulating economic growth and job creation in most developing countries in the African continent. In South Africa, women represent 52 percent of the total population and a number of studies show that more women are engaging into entrepreneurship since the attainment of independence in 1994. The Global Entrepreneur Monitor is of the view that South African women play a greater role in unlocking economic growth in the country. Van Der Merwe (2002) reveals that the government of South Africa, resultantly, have been focusing on provision of training to previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs. This clearly shows that the government of South Africa also values the importance of women as entrepreneurs, because successful entrepreneurs are able to enhance socio-economic development in both developed and developing countries.

In light of the above, it is essential to identify strategies to sustain the growth and development of entrepreneurship. Thus, this paper has identified strategies which are adopted by women entrepreneurs to counter challenges of survival and to prosper in the long run.

Objectives

- The primary objective is to investigate on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and strategies adopted to promote small business in the long run.

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- To identify business strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs to remain sustainable and completely effective in the market.
- To identify strategies to sustain the growth and development of entrepreneurship.

The Role of Women Entrepreneurship in the Economic Development of South Africa

The important role that entrepreneurship plays in inspiring economic activity, generating jobs, alleviating poverty and elevating of the standard of living, has been recognized internationally including South Africa. South Africa is a developing country with high unemployment rates as well as having low levels of formal and higher education. South Africa therefore, has a vital need for entrepreneurs that can perform as a vehicle to fight unemployment in the economy as a whole (Maas and Herrington 2006). Women entrepreneurs are progressively considered essential for economic development. Not only do they contribute to job creation, but they also contribute to a range of entrepreneurial activities for development (Verheul et al. 2004). McClelland et al. (2005) describe a women-owned business as any in which one or more women possess a share of 51 percent of the business. In the case of a public business, at least 51 percent of stock should be possessed by one or more women.

However, previous economic development has remained steady in most developed countries where women have progressively advanced in entrepreneurial ability in contrast to less developed countries where entrepreneurial activities has been stagnant (Jalbert 2000). Most small-scale entrepreneurs face problems in developing their businesses, but women face particular gender-based problems and challenges. Unfortunately Women carry most of the domestic responsibilities, which has a limiting effect on their ability to generate income outside their homes (Richardson et al. 2004). According to Bruni et al. (2004: 258), men have continuously dominated the community and that the gender approach to entrepreneurship make women unnoticed. The assertion and perception that a woman's capability is insufficient, is biased and unfounded. Kelly et al. (2013) asserted that until the 1980s, little was known and recognised about the potentials inherent in women entrepreneurs. Prior to this period, most studies or research where centered on men. Therefore, it is during the 1980s that scientific research activities started on women entrepreneurs and women-run establishments began to improve. Mattis (2004) agreed that it was only recently that something was known about the characteristics of female entrepreneurs, their motivations, backgrounds, families, occupational experience, their successes and failures.

Women-owned Businesses

According to Timmons and Spinelli (2004), there is an increase in the number of women involved in entrepreneurship. Statistics in the USA shows that women-owned businesses stand as the fastest rising sector of new business start-up. Black women-owned businesses form a larger share of Black owned businesses than White women-owned businesses (Mattis 2004). Verheul et al. (2004: 4) also observed that women entrepreneurship rates are high in some countries such as Argentina, India and Brazil, and low in others such as Japan, Russia and Belgium, and is strictly related to overall conditions for entrepreneurship in a developed country. On the average, greater responsibilities or personal income in day-to-day activities amongst women decreases entrepreneurial activity (Tomink and Rebernik 2003). Furthermore, more than 60 percent of males participate in entrepreneurial activities than women. The substantial gender gap remains, despite the speedy development of women in professional and managerial jobs. The likelihood is that managerial jobs might be better for highly skilled women than entrepreneurial opportunities, and working in the industry is desired to that of entrepreneurship, because women are more risk adverse (Minniti and Arenius 2003).

Considering South Africa, women constitute 52 percent of the adult population. Of this percentage, 41 percent only is part of the energetic working population, while 14.7 percent are employed in executive managerial positions. Women entrepreneurs in South Africa mostly function within the crafts, personal services, hawking and retail sectors (Maas and Herrington 2006). Botha (2006) stated that every government that is involved in developing economic success should be interested in upholding the entrepreneurial fluctuating traits. Women embody a pool of possible entrepreneurs in several stages of growth, through different demographic patterns and different labour force settings. The average TEA (Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity) index for women entrepreneurs in all countries was calculated as 7.72 percent for 2006. South Africa's TEA index for women entrepreneurs for this same year was 4.83 percent, which is lower than the global average. The low index concerning women entrepreneurs in South Africa might be associated with the lack of skills and low educational levels of women entrepreneurs (Maas and Herrington 2006).

Characteristics of Women Entrepreneurs

Research shows that women entrepreneurs have distinctive characteristics and background in comparison to their male counterparts. Coulter (2003) found that in numerous circumstances, evidence of small business traditions have been in existence within the families of women entrepreneurs. According to Meyer (2009) women entrepreneurs mostly fall in the age range of 35 to 45 and are married with children. It was also found that most of the women entrepreneurs were the first-born in their families, where level of education is of high importance to the parents. This type of background provided the women entrepreneurs with good role models and a financial and supportive environment to start a new venture.

Jalbert (2000) reveals that women bring assurance and honesty to business, by caring about economic empowerment, development and innovation. Also, they construct and sustain long-term relationships and are mindful of cultural differences. Helene (2006) noted that women entrepreneurs are flexible and goal-oriented, imaginative and accurate, excitable and have high vigor. They have average levels of confidence and can deal with their social and economic environment. Jalbert (2000) observed that women entrepreneurs have certain characteristics that support their creativity and create new ideas and ways of doing things. They are highly inspired and self-directed and they likewise have a high internal locus of control and accomplishment.

Factors that Motivate Women to Start a Business

There are many factors that motivate women to start a business, amongst many are: personal motivating factors, flexibility of self-employment, social oriented factors, economic factors and other general factors.

Personal Motivating Factors

According to Jalbert (2000) women's personal motivations for starting a business are associated to their need to be independent, accomplish job satisfaction, achieve self-actualisation, to be creative, have liberty and total control. Women entrepreneurs are also motivated by both financial rewards and own rewards such as being one's own manager, having liberation, freedom, total control and placing one's information and skills into practice (Bradley and Boles 2003). Winn (2004) observed that women start their own businesses because they want independence, control and that they are assured that their businesses will deliver income and personal satisfaction. Mallon and Cohen (2001) argue that women start their businesses for better freedom, independence, stability and the capability to live by a personal value system that is often valuable within the organisation. Organisations may limit, contain, aggravate or dissatisfy, where self-employment offers them chance of freedom and personal integrity. Lebakeng (2008) found that women are motivated to start their own businesses by both push and pull factors. The most vital motivators for starting a business are the need for independence, flexible work schedules, dissatisfaction with salaried jobs, challenges, social status, influence of role models and insufficient family income.

Kock (2008) concluded that women entrepreneurs mostly settle for self-employment by pull factors rather than push factors. According to a previous journal, the main reasons for women entrepreneurs to start a business are the need for self-fulfillment, challenge and confidence in the product or service offered.

Flexibility of Self-employment

Bradley and Boles (2003) reveals that flexibility is an important motivational aspect for women with children, since self-employment has its benefit of merging work with taking care of a child. According to Wasilczuk and Zieba (2008), the precise motivation for women to start a business is the need to balance their family and profession. The flexibility of self-employment with the benefit of balancing work with family duties is an important factor for women to start a business (Heilman and Chen 2003). Winn (2004) mentioned that before a woman chooses a type of business, she carefully looks at her family condition and the problems these responsibilities might impose. Weiler and Bernasek (2001) indicated that women choose self-employment instead of wage employment to achieve greater flexibility in the time that will be allocated to work and time towards family responsibilities. In some circumstances they are prepared to trade off higher earnings for more time that can be dedicated to family responsibilities.

Verheul et al. (2004) believe that a flexible work schedule such as part-time work could inspire the involvement of women in the economy by merging work and household responsibilities. Nevertheless, the accessibility of flexible work schedules might have a destructive impact on women entrepreneurship because this might encourage more women to become wage-employed.

Socially Oriented Factors

McClelland et al. (2005) found that women have more socially oriented intentions before starting a business. Women start businesses to "make a difference". This makes them more clients focused than men. In South Africa, women want to create an improved environment for their communities and families and are extremely mindful of the social contribution their businesses can make to help others. Women believe that it is possible to generate something both having socially integrity and being economically viable, and mix their business relationships with other relationships in their existence including their families and links to the community (McClelland et al. 2005). Winn (2004) also found that women start their businesses to make a contribution socially in addition to economic motives.

Economic Factors

Women entrepreneurs are more established in low-income countries with higher rates of birth. For women in these countries, participation in entrepreneurship may mean that self-employment is a way to avoid establishment and cultural limitations and provides essential family income. Hence, better economic security like welfare payments or steady employment is related to less opportunity and essential entrepreneurship in these countries (Minniti and Arenius 2003). Verheul et al. (2004) reveals that wealth increase within the economy inclines to be accompanied by technological improvement and increase in the service sector, which might generate opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

General Factors

According to Maas and Herrington (2006) the general factors that may have a positive influence on women in South Africa and pull them into entrepreneurship are the following:

- government policies are favouring formerly underprivileged groups such as women;
- more role models exist for women entrepreneurs;
- being rivals against male entrepreneurs might motivate women to show themselves;
- interacting with other women entrepreneurs helps them to develop themselves; and
- women want to become financially independent.

The flexibility in their businesses permits them to manage their personal requirements, like caring for their families and it is clear that women entrepreneurs can offer and deliver the same services as corporate companies at a lower cost to customers (Maas and Herrington 2006). Running businesses gives women entrepreneurs the opportunity to gain experience, improve them and recognise their self-potential.

Business Success Strategies Adopted by Women Entrepreneurs in order to Remain Effective in the Market Environment

Firms started businesses with profit maximisation and accomplishing firm successful growth as their main goal (Calatone et al. 2006). In the paper about women entrepreneurs' perceptions of success, it is clear that they provided significant value to sustain customer associations, their personal relations and religious affiliations as well as maintaining work-life balance (Orser and Riding 2006).

Entrepreneurial Success

Weber and Schafer (2007) used mere existence as an alternative for success, but the lack of failure does not spontaneously compare to the existence of success. An alternative definition of business success depends on how long an entrepreneur can survive and prevent uncontrolled withdrawal and also, the more successful the business is (Van Praag 2003). According to Hisrich (2000) success is measured in terms of sales growth, income growth, employment trends and satisfaction. Entrepreneurial success according to Nieman et al. (2003) is attributed to personal characteristics and managerial skills. The personal success factors of entrepreneurs are creativity and innovation, risk taking orientation, leadership, good human relations, a positive attitude, perseverance and commitment. Managerial success factors on the other hand, include planning, knowledge of competitors, mainly being market oriented, delivery client service, setting a high quality as priority, financial insight and management, knowledge and skills with regard to the business (Nieman et al. 2003).

Strategies Adopted by Women Entrepreneurs

To overcome the various challenges that women face, women entrepreneurs who have met with success have done so by adopting a number of effective strategies. The strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs are divided into two broad areas which are personal success factors and the managerial success factor.

Personal Success Factors

Successful women entrepreneurs have shown certain entrepreneurial success factors as well as managerial success factors. It is important for women to analyses themselves to know exactly what their strengths and weaknesses are in order to ensure success. Personal success factors of women entrepreneurs are explained in detailed below.

Creativity and Innovation

Creativity can involve the alteration or improvement of existing procedures or products, the identification of opportunities and resolutions to problems. Ultimately it involves new ideas. Every effect of new concepts is based on innovation. Though entrepreneurs understand the importance of innovation, they often view the risk and the high investment that the improvements of innovative products or services require as out of proportion to the profit potential. This explains why owners of small businesses often creatively adapt innovations of competitors (Nieman et al. 2003). In the long term, an enterprise's success is determined by the degree to which worthy ideals is generated, established and implemented. Creativity consists of individuals who are open to new ideas and new methods to the business and focusing on what can be done differently to ensure success in the enterprises (Nieman et al. 2003). In order words, women take the initiative to solve problems in a unique manner in other to be successful, which then contain an element of risk.

Risk Orientation

Successful women entrepreneurs are prepared to take premeditated risks and appraise innovation and risk critically. There is a strong connection between innovation and readiness to take risks, while to take risks hampers innovation. Successful women entrepreneurs do not take chances, but occasionally do when it is necessary to take calculated risks. Unsuccessful women entrepreneurs, on the other hand, do not take risks, or take costly, impulsive decisions that are not well contemplated upon (Mukherjee 2010). Successful women entrepreneurs avoid opportunities where there is a high probability that they will be unsuccessful; irrespective of the reward involved (Mukherjee 2010). Women entrepreneurs also are able to control their enterprises by gaining access to information. Subsequently, they moderate their exposure to financial loss by involving investors, often with the risk of losing control. They reduce the period between the conceptualisation of ideas and making the product or services available in the market. In this way they frequently limit the risk of competition.

Good Human Relations

Successful women entrepreneurs are team builders and allow individuals to feel worthy, by giving duties and giving credit for what have been accomplished. Women know how to work with people and give encouragement, how to build a comprehensive network of contacts which may be useful in the future. Successful women entrepreneurs recognise the importance of business relationships. They have good dealings with clients; see human relations as an important source of the business and regard long-term goodwill as more important than short-term benefits. This success factor has been recognised as more typical of successful than average entrepreneurs in developing countries (Nieman et al. 2003).

Positive Attitude

Women Entrepreneurs show a positive attitude towards their business and ensures that customers have a positive feeling towards them and shows appreciation towards doing business with them. No customer would like to transact with a negative business minded individual and women entrepreneurs who are uncertain of themselves or of their business, cannot expect customers to believe in them or in their business (Zeelie 1998).

Perseverance

Perseverance in the enterprise is linked to the positive approach of entrepreneurs to their enterprise. Women entrepreneurs who have a positive attitude towards their enterprise rely on their businesses despite challenges, and are willing to persevere in their efforts to ensure success (Nieman et al. 2003). According to Nieman et al. (2003), perseverance is the ability of entrepreneurs to put effort into their businesses ideals regardless of challenges, obstacles and hindrances. True entrepreneurs are born with the perception that makes it possible for them to persevere. Perseverance is an indicator of the entrepreneur's ability to frequently take different actions to solve a problem or overcome challenges (McClelland 1986). Mostly women entrepreneurs are successful only after a number of efforts. It is possible that successful entrepreneurs persevere through every challenge, while unsuccessful entrepreneurs are people who try once, fail and then do not try again.

Commitment

The success factor, commitment to business, refers to the willingness of women entrepreneurs to commit their personal resources to the business. It is an indication that entrepreneurs have a high level of confidence towards their businesses. A high-potential enterprise cannot be developed and established on a part-time basis. It requires total commitment and participation. Women entrepreneurs mostly make personal sacrifices and extraordinary efforts to deal with a challenge in the business (McClelland 1986).

Managerial Success Factors

Successful women entrepreneurs are systematic in management, for example taking decisions about the products that will be supplied, the location of enterprise, the organisation of each division and its target market. Effective management of the business should ensure quality success, making use of the managerial strategies below in other to ensure success.

Knowledge of Competitors

Knowledge of competitors is one of the strategies women use for success. This means that women entrepreneurs know who their competitors are, what the competitors are doing and what the position of their own business is compared to that of their strategies. The knowledge of this, will determine the competitive advantage of their businesses in order to differentiate it from other businesses (Nieman et al. 2003). Knowledge of one's' competitors is vital for an establishment to be successful and for the continuation of its existence and growth. Entrepreneurs determine their competitive advantage by discovering why customers or clients prefer their product or services. To ensure competitive advantage, women entrepreneurs ensure that they offer better products and services in a different way compared to their competitors.

Mainly Market Oriented

Women entrepreneurs are market oriented. They know which individual the business is aimed at, what the target market's requirements are and how to meet this requirement in order to be successful. The product and service of market oriented entrepreneurs are developed to meet the needs of clients. Women entrepreneurs also position the business in a way that their business is differentiated from another competitor's advantage (McClelland 1986). The consumer is where the attention of the enterprise lies, and the product and services are prepared to meet customers' or client's needs.

Financial Insight and Management

According to Nieman et al. (2003), understanding of financial concepts, knowledge of what financial management is, how important it is and how it must be applied in the SME and a book-keeping system are important factors that women consider in business to ensure success. To achieve success in an enterprise, sound financial principles must be applied. Merely by looking at their profit and loss statements one can identify good entrepreneurs. To ensure success, women entrepreneurs are often not responsible for the book-keeping systems of their enterprises, they often use experts for this but they ensure that the book-keeping is done in a way that they can understand.

Knowledge and Skills with Regard to the Business

Women entrepreneurs usually have adequate knowledge and skills regarding their enterprise to ensure sound success. They are also aware of their own limitations and make use of experts to provide them with advice and assistance and in this way, improve their performance. Sufficient important experience that has been gained before the business started is one of the most priced bases for success. A significant number of successful women entrepreneurs started their businesses in the same industry in which they worked for a few years (Luk 1996). To be successful, women entrepreneurs make use of experts inside and outside the enterprise to carry out some of the functions in the business, and they as well attend seminars and training sessions (Mukherjee 2010).

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

According to Richardson et al. (2004), women entrepreneurs suffer from substantial material limitations to unhelpful attitudes arising from society's negative attitudes towards women in businesses. Lebakeng (2008) argued that the main problems women entrepreneurs face are lack of education and training, industry management skills, inter-role clashes, lack of female role models, lack of timely business information, discrimination in the access to credit and the pressure of child care. Kock (2008) found that the difficulties women face when starting an enterprise are: lack of business management skills, inter-role conflict within their home and work, absence of timely business information, high risk aversion by women entrepreneurs, deficiency in self-confidence and a lack of awareness. The main problem women entrepreneurs experience in running a business are liquidity and financial problems. McClelland et al. (2005) identified the following challenges by the women entrepreneurs when starting a business and are discussed in detail below as follows:

Lack of Finance

Wickham (2001) mentions that access to financial resources is one of the major obstacles that prevent women from starting their own businesses in greater numbers. Mattis (2004) found that recently, women-owned business received less than 2 percent of available capital resources, particularly in possibly lucrative new undertakings in high-technology fields. While men often rely on investors, bank loans, or individual loans in addition to individual funds as sources of start-up capital, women generally depend on individual assets, such as credit cards and savings. Hendricks (2001) discovered that an additional problem is that most women who want to get a loan from banks do not have the needed skills to structure a qualified business plan. Verheul et al. (2004) argued that financial institutions are hesitant to loan money to early-stage businesses because of the high risks involved and the lack of a track record. Women encounter more problems in obtaining finance through the regular channels, because the business outline of women is frequently less favorable for investors. Women start small businesses in the service sector and often work as self-employed in the business. However, Bruni et al. (2004: 260), consider that the problems encountered by women to obtain credit make them to choose low capital intensive ventures instead. Women show a higher risk profile in their ability to run a business compared to the traditional male perspective, because women display a lower rate of self-confidence and had barely experienced a management position in their previous jobs. Due to their absence of financial competencies, women have difficulty in handing out medium-term accounts plan for their business.

Lack of Experience and Management Skills

According to McClelland et al. (2005) lack of managerial experience is one of the obstacles women have to overcome in the area of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, they observed that women are principally in the found "traditional sectors" such as retail, service, teaching and office administration, rather than in executive managerial or technical areas. Many women entrepreneurs consequently gain their first managerial experience in their own businesses. Coleman (2007) stated that women are less equipped for business ownership in the areas of human and financial capital. Women are less educated in business disciplines and are limited in terms of management experience.

Family Constraints

An additional limitation to women entrepreneurs is family commitments of married women (O'Neill and Viljoen 2001). Winn (2004) added that married women, particularly those with children, live in two worlds: one at work and one at home. Childcare and other home responsibilities affect women's ability and willingness to undertake serious business ventures. Winn (2004) also found that the women entrepreneurs' business responsibilities affect their ability to relax at home. This again, causes problems and work-home conflict. Bradley and Boles (2003) determined that a number of women wait until their children are older before venturing into entrepreneurship.

Jalbert (2000) described that the combination of two work-related issues, one at home and one at work, are challenges for women in any environment, however it becomes a double burden in a developing economy where scarcity and lack of infrastructure such as lack of electricity, water, roads, communication and business sites, can make the most basic tasks harder and consumes more time. Richardson et al. (2004) pointed out that notwithstanding the restraints; various women in Africa run prosperous businesses that employ others. This business success offers women entrepreneurs a sense of pride, own worth and satisfaction. Additionally, they could act as role models for other women in their precise communities and social settings.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used the quantitative research design and survey research method of data collection. The paper involved 50 women entrepreneurs in the Nkonkobe Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Data for the research paper was collected through self-administered questionnaires and the use of random sampling. Questions related to an investigation into the strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs to ensure small business success are usually insightful. The questionnaire consisted of primarily five-point Likert scale questions which consist of strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree questions except for demographic questions. Data analysis included Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), using descriptive statistics as the statistical tool. The empirical research for the paper was conducted in the main survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this paper confirmed that women entrepreneurs in South Africa lack financial resources for investment, lack of training, lack of managerial skills, lack of information technology and infrastructures as well as a lack of market skills are some of the challenges with which women entrepreneurs faced in South Africa. Though the respondents highlighted a number of motivations and challenges, the paper realised that not all variables established in other proceeding studies done elsewhere were relevant to challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Variables like educational qualifications, gender of owner, size of the business, age of the business and uncertainty about the women entrepreneurs' returns were found to be irrelevant.

In addition, it was also observed that some of the respondents highlighted that the variables which actually serves as motivations and challenges to women entrepreneurs in South Africa are government support, finance, training, future business benefits, respect, information technology training, willingness and ability to serve niche markets, internal resources and vision. The results eventually showed that the strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs have a positive effect on the success of small businesses in developing countries.

Session A: Demographics

In terms of the position occupied by the respondents in the entrepreneurial venture, the result indicates that 84.6 percent owned the business while 15.4 percent were managing the business. This is consitent with the studies done by Asah and Fatoki (2011) which argues that a large percentage of SMEs in South Africa are being managed by their owners because of lack of finance to employee skilled managers (Table 1).

Table 1: Position in business

Position occupied	*Percentage of respondents*
Business owners	84.6
Managers of business	15.4

The level of education obtained by respondents is important to determine the qualification women entrepreneurs hold in their various business as shown in the Table 2.

In terms of the education qualification, the result indicates that most people who participated are holding a certificate with (46.2%), degree with 7.7 percent, diploma with 10.3 percent, and high school with 25.6 percent while primary school with 10.3 percent.

Table 2: Level of education

Educational qualification	*Percentage of respondents*
Certificate	46.2
Degree	7.7
Diploma	10.3
High school	25.6
Primary school	10.3

Table 3: Age distribution

Age distribution	*Percentage*
Below 25	30.8
Between 26-35	8.2
Between 36-45	28.2
Between 46-55	10.3
Between 56-65	2.6

In terms of the age distribution of the respondents, most of the respondents who participated were below 25 years old with (30.8%), 28.2 percent are between 26 and 35 years old, 28.2 percent are between 36 and 45 years old, 10.3 percent are between 46 and 55 years old and 2.6 percent are between 56 and 65 years old. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) explained that age is generally considered to be an important factor in relation to implied knowledge which is usually acquired over time through training and work experience (Table 3).

In term of econmic sector, the result shows that 35.9 percent of respondents are in the retailing sector while the wholesale sector have the higestest percentage of 64.1 percent. In terms of the number of employees, this is essential when determining whether the firm meets the criteria of being defined as a small or medium enterprises. This is consistent to the definition of the SMMEs (Table 4).

Table 4: Economic factor

Economic sector	*Percentage*
Retailing	35.9
Wholesale	64.1

In terms of the number of people employed, the results show that 82.1 percent of local SMEs have less than 20 employess, 12.8 percent of the respondents were neutral while 5.1 percent had more than 20 employees, indicating a small business type (Table 5).

Table 5: Number of employee

Number employed	*Percentage*
No response	12.8
Below 20	82.1
21-60	5.1

The year(s) of business operation indicated that 20 percent of the respondents said their businesses have been operating for 1 year, 8 percent of the respondents said that their businesses have been operating for 2 years, 15 percent of the respondents said that their businesses have been operating for 3 years, 4 percent of the respondents said that their businesses have been operating for 4 years and 53 percent of the respondents said that their business has been operating for 5 years and more, showing that the majority of SMEs were older than five years (Table 6).

Table 6: Years in business

Years in business	*Percentage*
1	20
2	8
3	15
4	4
5 and above	53

The source of financing the business also indicated that 6 percent of the respondents obtained a loan from government, 16 percent obtained a loan from family, 10 percent obtained a loan from a bank, 59 percent financed their businesses through their personal savings and 9 percent financed their businesses through external support (Table 7).

Table 7: Source of finance

Source of finance	*Percentage*
Government Loan	6
Family loan	16
Bank loan	10
Personal saving	59
External support	9

Section B: Business Strategy

The responses in terms of whether Human Resource Management could be a strategy to improve the performance of women entrepreneurs in their organisation shows that human resource management as a strategy adopted by women enterpreneurs help to improve the businesses and enhance success as 53.32 percent of women entrepreneurs stongly agreed, 35.38 percent agreed 3.6 percent strongly disagreed, 2.56 percent disagreed and 5.14 percent who were undecided (Table 8).

Table 8: Human resource management as a strategy

Strongly agree	*Agreed*	*Undecided*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
53.32%	35.38%	5.14%	2.56%	3.6%

The responses in terms of whether market as a strategy could improve the performance of women entrepreneurs in their organisation shows that 71.8 percent strongly agreed that market is a strategy for business success and 10.3 percent agreed, 2.6 percent strongly disagrees, 2.5 percent disagree while 12.8 percent are undecided on marketing being a tool for success (Table 9).

Table 9: Market as a strategy

Strongly agree	*Agreed*	*Undecided*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
71.8%	10.3%	12.8%	2.5%	2.6%

The response in terms of whether research and development as a strategy could improve the performance of women entrepreneurs in their organisation shows that 52.1 percent of these respondents strongly agreed, 17.9 percent agreed, 17.2 percent strongly disagreed, while 12.8 percent disagreed (Table 10).

Table 10: Research and development as a strategy

Strongly agree	*Agreed*	*Undecided*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
52.1%	17.9%	None	12.8%	17.2

In terms of whether by consulting technical experts, the respondents could improve the business performance in their organizations, the response indicated that, 35.9 percent of women entrepreneurs strongly agreed that consulting technical experts would improved their businesses performance, 28.2 percent agreed, 13.8 percent strongly disagree, 11.8 percent disagree while 10.3 percent are undecided (Table 11).

Table 11: Consulting technical experts as a strategy

Strongly agree	*Agreed*	*Undecided*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
35.9%	28.2%	10.3%	11.8%	13.8%

The response in terms of whether by attempting to predict industrial trends and acquisition of competitor's activities could improve the performance of women entrepreneurs in their organisations shows that 60.1 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that attempting to predict industrial trends and acquisition of competitors activities could improve the business performance in their organisations, 19.9 percent agreed, 16 percent strongly disagreed, while 4 percent strongly disagreed (Table 12).

Table 12: Predicting industrial trends

Strongly agree	*Agreed*	*Undecided*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
60.1%	19.9%	None	4%	16%

Section C: Challenges Faced By SMEs

Despite the strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs, there are some challenges as well, the question on challenges are discussed below:

Do you consider it challenging for women to start up a business in male dominated society?

The response in terms of considering if it is a challenge for women entrepreneurs to start up a business in male dominated society indicated that, 64.1 percent of the respondents disagreed that it was not a challenge while 35.9 percent considered it as a challenge for women to start up a business in male dominated society (Table 13).

Table 13: Women changes

Challenges	*Percentage*
Yes	35.9
No	64.1

Do the family responsibilities stand as a challenge to your business?

Responses in terms of whether the family responsibilities stand as a challenge to the respondents' businesses shows that, 66.7 percent said that family responsibilities do not pose a challenge, 33.3 percent said that family responsibilities poses as a challenge (Table 14).

Table 14: Family responsibilities

Challenges	*Percentage*
Yes	33.3
No	66.7

CONCLUSION

This paper has made an effort to make a contribution to the area of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and has shown findings and recommendations. The literature review revealed various elements within the field of women entrepreneurs finance, market, information technology and infrastructure, managerial skills and training among others. The main findings of this paper showed that lack of access to finance, lack of access to markets, lack of access to information technology and infrastructure, lack of access to managerial skills and training as well as lack of market are the major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. A good understanding of the challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs in South Africa has been clearly identified and discussed in details and commendations or implications to these challenges have also been discussed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section focuses on recommendations to women entrepreneurs in South Africa as well as other developing countries on how their businesses performance can be improved successfully and economically in order to meet up with the environmental challenges within and outside their operating environment. Some of these recommendations and how it could be improved are directed to women entrepreneurs, the policy-makers and government as well as the financial institutions. These are mentioned and discussed below as follows.

Results clearly showed that business strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs are essential for the successful running of a business in South Africa. However, most women do not take important factors for the success of their businesses into consideration. Women entrepreneurs should take some time to paper the nature of challenges other women entrepreneurs faced in their businesses and possibly provide solutions to such issues before starting their own businesses. There is also a need for adequate preparation before venturing into a business, which women entrepreneurs should as well take note of. There is also need for women entrepreneurs who are successful in business to assist other women entrepreneurs who are just coming into business through a mentorship program or encourage the start-ups to join the business incubators. The creation of the incubators serve as part of the wider evolution of business clusters and enterprise development in South Africa, this is aimed at promoting women entrepreneurs and can help to reduce the challenges these women entrepreneurs are likely to face in business.

Financial institutions that are willing to offer financial assistance to women entrepreneurs should conduct awareness campaigns in order to educate them on what the requirements for loans application are or what should receive attention before their businesses can be financially supported. In addition, this could help women entrepreneurs who do not have knowledge and information about bank collateral security to be rendered before loans are granted in order to expand their businesses.

The Government of South Africa and the policy-makers should work together as a team in order to assist women entrepreneurs to start up a business as this is a way in which the society can be improved and employment creation can be increased. The Government is also expected to intervene in instances where entrepreneurial activity is hampered: areas such as imposing some percentage of tax to start-ups and some policies that can discourage or a cause back draw to any business. The government should also be willing to take steps to make practical help available to women entrepreneurs. The government should also improve the awareness of women on training programmes. This can be done through vocational public colleges. This programme should be tailored towards the meeting of women entrepreneurs needs.

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