

# STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURIAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG PURDAH WOMEN IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

By

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## **Abstract**

*The implication of the continued exclusion of purdah women in entrepreneurial engagement have not been given the required attention, thus, to achieve full human and societal development, more attention should be given to women's participation in entrepreneurship. The study examined strategies for enhancing entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria. Two purposes were raised from which two research questions were formulated to guide the study. A mixed-method design (qualitative and quantitative) was adopted for the study. The research was carried out in Ilorin metropolis, consisting of three local government areas and it was chosen because of its centrality in the state. The entire purdah women in the Ilorin metropolis constitute the population for this study. Purposive sampling was then adopted to sample 75 purdah women from the study area. Data were collected using a researcher-designed structured questionnaire and interview. Percentage and mean were used to analyze the research questions. The study found that business model strategy has the potential to enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State to a moderate extent (mean = 2.74, SD = 1.03), also mentorship programmes strategy enhances entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State to a moderate extent (mean = 2.68, SD = 1.01). It was concluded that Purdah women in the society should be encouraged towards entrepreneurial engagement and given all required support to thrive on the journey. Emphasis should be made by relevant stakeholders to organize programmes that will include purdah women-based enterprises. It was recommended among others that Governments, private organizations, and NGOs should organize entrepreneurship mentorship programmes for female-based and purdah women enterprises.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Purdah Women, Strategies, Business Model, Mentorship

## **Introduction**

The need to engage all possible hands in entrepreneurial activities is a challenge that nations must address if they are in pursuit of accelerated development. Entrepreneurship is arguably among the most important instruments of economic engagement. The more effective

the entrepreneurial cadre of a nation, the faster the pace of development. The advent of entrepreneurship and the creation of ventures for an individual has helped developed and developing countries to advance further toward their economic objectives. To admit its total inclusion, schools' curriculums have been structured to expose students at all levels of education to the potential for entrepreneurship engagement. Irrespective of gender, entrepreneurship exposes both males and females to opportunities for innovation and creativity, as well as venture creation. Thus, the fact remains that running a business is quite different from being an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is majorly after values creation and impacting lives, which in return is accompanied by pecuniary benefits.

In Northern Nigeria, the purdah system remains prevalent among women. This implies that some women are disallowed from total participation in entrepreneurial activities. While the system is restrictive, it does not have to prevent the involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities. When women are empowered and equipped in any society, they tend to be productive and contribute optimally to economic development. However, certain hindrances affect women's participation in entrepreneurship and venture creation. From observations, women in most of the developing world (including Nigeria) continue to face various forms of challenges and inhibitions, which limit their opportunities to develop to their full potential which then affects their pursuit of enterprise success. Yet, women's participation in entrepreneurial activities has been recognized as a mechanism for the development of the economy, the creation of new jobs, and poverty alleviation poverty (Ray & Ray, 2011). Entrepreneurship worldwide is associated with economic growth and is universally perceived as one safest routes toward poverty alleviation for countries fighting poverty (Ray & Ray, 2011). Women entrepreneurship specifically is under much research from researchers from all backgrounds as women entrepreneurs, creating jobs and social security not only for themselves but also for many others, can become an important panacea to the challenge of economic development (Aslam, Latif & Aslam, 2013).

It is important to note that Nigerian society is diverse and holds contradictory views with no consensus as to the definition of women's rights (Roomi & Harrison, 2010). Women face discrimination and gender inequalities from cradle to grave owing to gender-biased power relations based on inequality and prejudice (Rehman & Roomi, 2011). Thus, women's

subordination is prevalent through cultural norms and traditions and justified by misinterpretations of sacred religious texts. However, in a bid to raise their level of participation in entrepreneurial activities in business sectors, women entrepreneurs are often met with a barrage of challenges not the least of which are posed by socio-cultural factors. These factors, as opined by Abimbola and Agboola (2011) and Yusuf (2013), are among those that influence women's willingness and ability to venture into entrepreneurial activities. Abimbola and Agboola (2011), further argue that within the sociocultural context, sub-cultures like locale (region), ethnicity, religion, and caste, shape individual perception and value systems, especially concerning decisions to venture into entrepreneurial activity.

The concept of the Purdah system as strict religious enforcement of seclusion rule upon married women from the public may be viewed to restrict the full outdoor participation of women in large-scale entrepreneurship. There are different views concerning the purdah system based on the cultural background and value system. Hugo (2012), posits that the Purdah discourages some women from venturing into entrepreneurship and that the few women that venture into entrepreneurship face patronage discrimination which invariably affects the creativity, innovation, and employment generation capacities of potential women entrepreneurs.

The fact remains that the purdah women are part of the society, whose views, thoughts, and actions are needed for inclusiveness. They have been largely segregated as different parts of women in society. Cultural or religious beliefs have not secluded purdah women to participate in entrepreneurial activities, rather proper measures or strategies may need to be introduced if truly they are to venture into business creation. Certain strategies like the business model for purdah women, incubation and idea generation, and mentorship programmes can be designed or adopted to promote their participation in entrepreneurship.

The business approach model for purdah women and the mentorship programme are part of the strategies for developing entrepreneurial skills in women. Through the business model, a well-structured pattern of engaging in entrepreneurship is designed, which gives the purdah woman the opportunity to operate within her locality. According to Ahmed and Oladejo, (2016), the purdah business organization model enables all entrepreneurial activities to be executed within the environment of the purdah women. That is, both management of material resources and human resources will be within the purdah women's location and the staff to work with will

be mainly females. The model seeks to ensure that seclusion does not hinder purdah women's participation in entrepreneurship.

The mentorship programme is another strategy that can enhance purdah women's entrepreneurial engagement. This can be adapted to expose the purdah women to entrepreneurial opportunities and engagement that can benefit and develop their enterprise. Such a programme can be facilitated by experienced women in entrepreneurship who can share the wealth of knowledge in entrepreneurial engagement. Mentorship programmes are channeled to expose people to real situations in business management, also in form of guidance through running a successful business enterprise.

This mentorship programme can be an initiative of government or relevant stakeholder who are concerned with the problems facing seclusion in entrepreneurship. It could be designed to be virtual or hybrid and overseen by women who are also experts in entrepreneurship programme. The motive of such programme is to give purdah women the opportunity to also learn the significant of running an enterprise.

The present study identifies key research gaps: the limited number of academic research on purdah women entrepreneurship in the different sectors in Nigeria, and no specific model that accommodates the running of a business venture by purdah women. It is in line with this, that this study is of utmost importance to ascertain strategies for enhancing entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The engagement of women in entrepreneurship is not encouraging from the researcher's observations. The purdah system has restricted purdah women from participating in business activities, rather they are compelled to be housewives whose major role is to take care of the children and the house. To some parts of the world, purdah is just a form of dressing and has nothing to do with religious or cultural beliefs, but in the northern part of Nigeria, the situation is different, purdah women are meant to be in the house. Looking at the school environment, where the inculcation of entrepreneurial knowledge is being established, the percentage of purdah women is very low. This shows that aside from religious belief, there are other socio-cultural

factors (education, societal norms, traditional practice) that inhibit purdah women's entrepreneurial engagement in society.

It is argued that women's entrepreneurship is a growing global phenomenon, attracting considerable research attention during the last few decades (Henry, Foss, & Ahl, 2016). Not only does it contribute to economies in terms of job creation and economic growth, but it is also recognized as a source of increasing entrepreneurial intensity and diversity in a range of economic contexts as such, it offers a valuable focus for concerted scholarly research (Verheul et al., 2016). However, despite the significant contribution of women, entrepreneurship faces numerous barriers and challenges, which hinder them from the entrepreneur's success (Torres-Ortega, Errico, & Rong, 2015). On the other hand, women entrepreneurs have not been actively supported in starting their ventures in many emerging economies (Roomi & Parrott, 2018). Less attention has been given to women entrepreneurs in emerging economies despite their sustainable contributions toward GDP and poverty alleviation (Khan, 2014).

Research in this area is insufficient and often scanty; most studies focus more on the role of capital on enterprise growth, and sources of funding, rather than looking at the challenges women entrepreneurs encounter in venturing into entrepreneurship or why certain women have not been engaging in entrepreneurial activities. The strategies adopted by a few purdah women are wrong, which makes it very difficult to deal effectively with entrepreneurial engagement. Therefore, it is pertinent that this study was carried out to ascertain strategies for enhancing entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study is to ascertain strategies for enhancing entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the extent to which the business model strategy enhances entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria.
2. examine the extent to which the mentorship programme strategy enhances entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide this study.

1. To what extent does the business model strategy enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does the mentorship programme strategy enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria?

## **Methodology**

A mixed-method design was adopted (qualitative and quantitative). For the quantitative aspect, a descriptive survey design was used, while for the qualitative, two female-trained research assistants interviewed and observed the respondents. The study was carried out in Ilorin metropolis, consisting of three local government areas and it was chosen because of its centrality in the state. The entire purdah women in the Ilorin metropolis constitute the population for this study, however, the researcher has no idea as to the exact number of purdah women in Ilorin, Kwara State, since there is no reliable census on the number of existing purdah women, but there is an idea of the geographical locations where these purdah women are predominantly found. The study first conducted a preliminary survey to identify the geographical locations where these women are predominantly found. Purposive sampling was then adopted to sample 75 purdah women from the study area. Data were collected using a researcher-designed structured questionnaire, for illiterate respondents, the research assistant explained the questionnaire to them in the language they understood to fill them out appropriately. The interview was also used to get extensive information from the respondents. The questionnaire was made up of questions arranged systematically based on the research questions to gather data from the respondents in the study area. The questionnaire was divided into three sections A-C. Section A consists of demographic data while Section B consists of 10 questionnaire items on each of the research questions. Questionnaire items were developed with response categories as follows: High Extent (HE) 4-point, Moderate Extent (ME) 3-point, Low Extent (LE) 2-point, and Very Low Extent (VLE) 1-point. Section C contained interview questions for the extensive responses from the respondents.

The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of Business and Entrepreneurship Education, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria. Two research assistants were chosen based on their qualifications and experiences in conducting research. They were also from the community and share similar characteristics (dressing) with the respondents. They

both hold master's degrees and speak both native and English languages fluently. The reliability of the instrument was determined by the statistical analysis of the data collected from the pilot study. The split-half method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, which was divided into halves of odd and even numbers. The Spearman rank order correlation was used to calculate the reliability estimate of one-half (odd number) and the spearman brown prophecy formula was used to calculate the reliability estimate of the instrument which was 0.78. Therefore, the instrument was adjudged reliable and stable. The data collected were analyzed using frequencies and percentages for the demographic data of the respondents, while mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the research questions.

## Findings

Research Question 1: To what extent does the business model strategy enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent to which business model strategy enhances entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women**

S/N	Item Statements	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Idea/market opportunities.	2.73	0.93	Moderate Extent
2.	Business Management	2.87	1.09	Moderate Extent
3.	Value proposition	2.53	1.09	Moderate Extent
4.	Market Structure	3.07	1.07	Moderate Extent
5.	Competitive edge	3.00	0.90	Moderate Extent
6.	Revenue model	2.87	1.09	Moderate Extent
7.	Competitive environment	2.87	0.89	Moderate Extent
8.	Organization development	2.27	1.07	Low Extent
9.	Customer segmentation	2.27	1.07	Low Extent
10.	Customer relation	2.87	1.09	Moderate Extent
<b>Weighted average</b>		<b>2.74</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>Moderate Extent</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Analysis of data in Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent to which business model strategy enhances entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State. The Table reveals that the respondents indicate that business model strategy enhances idea/market opportunities, business management, and value proposition to a moderate extent (mean = 2.73, 2.87, and 2.53 respectively). Also, the respondents indicate that business model strategy enhances market structure, competitive edge, revenue model, and competitive environment to a moderate extent (mean = 3.07, 3.00, 2.87, and 2.87 respectively).

In the same way, the respondents indicate that business model strategy enhances organization development, customer segmentation to a low extent and customer relation to a moderate extent (mean = 2.87, 2.27, 2.27, and 2.87 respectively).

All the 10 item constructs have standard deviations ranging from 0.89 to 1.09. This means that the responses of the respondents are not widespread as they are close to the mean. Table 4 shows a grand calculated weighted average mean and standard deviation of 2.74 and 1.03, which indicate that all the constructs enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women to a moderate extent. This implies that the business model strategy enhances entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State to a moderate extent (mean = 2.74, SD =1.03).  
Research Question 2: To what extent does the mentorship programme strategy enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent to which mentorship programmes strategy enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women**

S/N	Item Statements	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Opportunities awareness	3.07	0.93	Moderate Extent
2.	Business advisory session	3.13	0.96	Moderate Extent
3.	Access to funding mentorship	2.07	1.19	Low Extent
4.	Business management guidance	2.87	0.89	Moderate Extent
5.	Financial management mentorship	2.67	1.14	Moderate Extent
6.	Customer relationship mentorship	2.13	0.89	Low Extent
7.	Record management advisory session	2.67	1.02	Moderate Extent
8.	Product/services uniqueness mentorship	2.67	1.02	Moderate Extent
9.	Social media presence mentorship	2.87	0.89	Moderate Extent
10.	Business sustainability mentorship	2.67	1.14	Moderate Extent
<b>Weighted average</b>		<b>2.68</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>Moderate Extent</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data in Table 5 show the mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent to which mentorship programmes strategy enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State. The Table reveals that the respondents indicate that the mentorship programmes strategy enhances opportunities awareness, business advisory sessions to a moderate extent, and access to funding mentorship to a low extent (mean = 3.07, 3.13, and 2.07 respectively). Also, the respondents indicate that the mentorship programmes strategy enhances business management guidance, financial management mentorship to a moderate extent, and customer relationship mentorship to a low extent (mean = 2.87, 2.67, and 2.13 respectively). In



the same way, the respondents indicate that the mentorship programmes strategy enhances record management advisory sessions, product/services uniqueness mentorship environment, social media presence mentorship, and business sustainability mentorship to a moderate extent (mean = 2.67, 2.67, 2.87, and 2.67 respectively).

All the 10 item constructs have standard deviation ranging from 0.89 to 1.14. This means that the responses of the respondents are not widespread as they are close to the mean. Table 4 shows a grand calculated weighted average mean and standard deviation of 2.68 and 1.01, which indicate that all the constructs enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women to a moderate extent. This implies that the mentorship programme strategy enhances entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women in Kwara State to a moderate extent (mean = 2.68, SD =1.01).

### **Report of Interactions with the Purdah women**

Ten sampled purdah women were also interviewed to obtain more information about the study. The interview was done by the two female research assistants, who had physical contact with the purdah women. All the ten purdah women speak negatively on the hindrance of sociocultural factors affecting their participation in entrepreneurship. They made mention of factors such as religion, family background, and level of education among others inhibiting full participation in entrepreneurship. Some of the purdah women initially feel reluctant to respond to the questionnaire and grant interview, saying they need to get their husband's approval before such.

They also expressed the significance of education on purdah women's entrepreneurial engagement. Six out of the ten respondents were educated (degree holders), and they justified the influence of their education on how they perceived entrepreneurship. The ways and manners in which they run their business ventures are quite different from those who had low or no education.

The purdah women made it known that strategies such as the purdah women business model can effectively assist and improve participation in entrepreneurship. It was observed during this period, that some purdah women established businesses solely for female or purdah women. Which makes it to be a unique business strategy.

In the discussion about mentorship programme strategy influence purdah women towards entrepreneurial engagement. They made emphasis on exclusion towards benefit from entrepreneurship mentorship programme because they were purdah women. So encouraged a female-based or only purdah women mentorship programme. They made it known that such a programme will not only expose them to

the rudiment of entrepreneurship but give them all the necessary knowledge to run an enterprise and sustain it.

Some of the purdah women complained that aside from those mentioned sociocultural factors, other factors mitigate against purdah women's entrepreneurial engagement. They talked about society's ideology towards purdah women, which limits them to what a normal female can do. They also attribute strictly all their actions to religious beliefs and cultural beliefs. All these inhibit their participation in entrepreneurship.

They further mentioned other strategies aside from the business model and mentorship programme, that can enhance their entrepreneurial engagement. They discuss strategies such as entrepreneurship competition which will allow them to showcase their entrepreneurial ideas and businesses, as well as blockchain processes, which will give them access to potential customers or link them up with female-based businesses.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The study found that both strategies can significantly enhance entrepreneurial engagement among purdah women. This finding coincided with Ahmed and Oladejo, (2016), that the purdah business organization model enables all entrepreneurial activities to be executed within the environment of the purdah women. That is, both management of material resources and human resources will be within the purdah women's location and the staff to work with will be mainly female individuals.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study have clearly shown that the success of any business venture depends on the strategies adopted. Purdah women in society should be encouraged towards entrepreneurial engagement and given all required support to thrive on the journey. Emphasis should be made by relevant stakeholders to organize programmes that will include purdah women-based enterprises. There is hope that the current seclusion of purdah women can be changed when good strategies are adopted. Therefore, that increasing the abilities of women to participate in entrepreneurship will improve the position of women in society and generally increase the possibility to venture creation and sustainability. So, more targeted initiatives are also needed to support purdah women entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs generally.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The business model fitted for purdah women's enterprise should be encouraged and adopted for purdah women's businesses. This need to be emphasized by government, relevant stakeholders, and individuals.
2. Government, private organizations, and NGOs should organize entrepreneurship mentorship programmes for female-based and purdah women enterprises.

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