

Female Entrepreneurship in Transitional Economies: An In-Depth Comparative Study about Challenges Facing Female Entrepreneurs in Nigeria and Egypt

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Abstract : In an attempt to increase the female total entrepreneurial activities (TEA) within Egypt and Nigeria, this paper aims to investigate the challenges facing female entrepreneurs operating in Egypt, in relative to Nigeria. In this regard, both researchers undertook a qualitative approach due to the scarcity of the literature reviewed on the topic; in those particular countries, and as an in-depth comparative mode. Therefore, ten Egyptian entrepreneurs in relative to ten Nigerian entrepreneurs were in-depth investigated. The research findings prove that female entrepreneurs face complex problems for being both gender and country-specific. Regarding the gender-specific obstacles, the work/life imbalance due to the scarcity of child-care nurseries and the prevalence of the gender-role division while performing the house chores rather than the concept of co-operation, acted as a main source of cultural challenge because women are considered mostly as 'housewives'. However, interestingly, this specific gender-discrimination challenge is proven to have no grounded effect in terms of the business-establishment and daily dealings neither in Egypt nor Nigeria, as one of the sample exclaimed 'as long as you pay, then no gender difference is set on the table'. Other country-specific challenges facing female entrepreneurs, lied in, the aggregate weak entrepreneurial framework governing both countries, also, women faced the difficulty of access to financial institutions with collateral requirements that are usually "hardly to be met", besides, the absence of the "micro-credit-Grameen-banks" concept. As well, the scarcity of incubators and business training centers providing network, consultancy and well-trained workforce to female entrepreneurs constitute a major hurdle for women entrepreneurs operating in both countries. Finally, this paper will conclude the research by offering a set of public-policy recommendations to pave the way for females to choose self-employment as a career path.

Keywords : entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurship, obstacles, framework conditions, culture, micro-credit

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