

THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT ON ENTREPRENEURIAL EMERGENCE: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY.

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents an analytical and evaluative study of the impact of socio-cultural environment on entrepreneurial emergence. The paper is based on theoretical survey of the socio-cultural characteristics of Nigerian society and its major sub-societies; and their roles in the emergence of entrepreneurs. The analysis of the relationship of socio-cultural environment and its influence on entrepreneurial emergence is built on a blend of scattered observations and some qualified reasoning about the distribution of business ownership amongst Nigerian ethnic groups, and gender. Primarily, the study reveals that socio-cultural environment significantly impact, both negatively and positively, on entrepreneurial emergence in society. It is revealed that beyond the negative or adverse economic circumstance of individuals, the value system of a people is a great determinant of the desire and capacity of people becoming entrepreneurs. Specifically, in Nigeria the study reveals that the prevalent socio-cultural characteristics, particularly the value system has enormous negative influence on the emergence of entrepreneurs. However, the findings also indicate that it is not all a negative influence but in some ways the Nigerian socio-cultural environment has positively influenced the emergence of Nigerian entrepreneurs. This disproves the general notion that the Nigerian society absolutely does not provide opportunities for entrepreneurial emergence. It is noted that although the Nigerian environment consists more of negative features, these features can be turned around and tapped as motivation for business ownership by potential entrepreneurs. Many Nigerians are entrepreneurs today through this approach. The paper however, recommends that certain traditions and values in Nigerian global and sub-cultural systems which have remained barriers to people particularly women becoming entrepreneurs must be dropped or modified to pave way for the emergence of entrepreneurs among Nigerian men and women. It is also recommended that there is need for a socio-cultural environmental management based on value reengineering and reorientation approach by government through its relevant agencies to help change and redirect the attitude and behaviour of Nigerians positively towards entrepreneurial involvement. Finally, Nigeria and similar societies should learn from the earlier and newly industrialized societies what socio-cultural characteristics and features make them thick as entrepreneurial societies, and modify their socio-cultural situations along such path.

Keywords: Impact, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial emergence, Theoretical analysis, Socio-cultural environment, Value re-engineering and re-orientation

1. Introduction

Since the period of the industrial revolution in 18th century when the French economist, Richard Cantillon, first used the word entrepreneurship to describe the 'risk bearing' activity and highlighted its role in the transformation of resources in an economy, the concept of entrepreneurship has continued to gain recognition as a great force for the economic advancement of individuals and nations' economic growth and development. The economic realities of many nations with experiences of economic hardship, unemployment and poverty in much recent time has made the role of entrepreneurs much more recognized and the need for entrepreneurship development much more emphasized in all nations, particularly in the developing world. However, it is obvious that in spite of the emphasis and effort by all nations to turn out entrepreneurs in their mass, entrepreneurial motivation have never been the same for all countries. Great disparities exist among nations and even among sub-societies in nations, in terms of entrepreneurial emergence.

The causal factors for the emergence of entrepreneurs have been at the front burner of entrepreneurial thoughts and theories, over the years, since the concept of entrepreneurship became popular as a means of wealth creation and economic growth and development. There have been many theories on entrepreneurial emergence and the disparities among societies. Apparently, in all of the theories, the environment has been implicated as playing a great role in the emergence of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship development in general. Simply, the entrepreneurial phenomenon has been linked to environmental influence and impact. The disparities among nations in developing entrepreneurial societies have also been attributed to environmental differences between societies both in time and space. It is against this

background that this paper examines the impact of socio-cultural environment on the emergence of entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Apparently, the Nigerian environment has been widely and greatly discussed with regards to entrepreneurship. The common view is that entrepreneurship situation in Nigeria is a function of the environment. Specifically, it is argued that the Nigerian environment has great influence and impact on the emergence of entrepreneurs and their behaviour. This view, however, has relied greatly on conjecture, with no verifiable evidence to support it. Also, the concept of environment has been narrowed in most cases to infrastructures of physical and economic/financial nature which are based on political and national economic decisions by government. It is very common that the influence and impact of environment on entrepreneurship is linked to physical and economic structures and conditions only, without considering the role of socio-cultural forces. Essentially, the concept of environment is much more than economic, political and physical conditions of a nation. It includes the socio-cultural characteristics of the people. This very important aspect of the environment is often neglected or overlooked when environmental issues are discussed in relation to entrepreneurship development. This accounts for the reason that government is often blamed for low entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurship development in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the view on the influence of environment on entrepreneurship is one dimensional (lopsided), focusing on only the negative impact on entrepreneurship. The fact that the environment has influenced and impacted on entrepreneurship positively in many countries has never been explored. Evidences of the positive impact of environment on entrepreneurial emergence abound in many countries. Such evidences can also be found in Nigeria. Unfortunately, no interest or attention is given in this direction. It is against this background, that this paper attempts to present an analytical and holistic view of the concept of environment and to critically examine in particular, the Nigerian socio-cultural environment and its influence/impact on the emergence of entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the Paper

The Paper seeks to:

- i Examine theoretically the role of socio-cultural environment on entrepreneurial emergence
- ii Analyze the specific ways which the Nigerian socio-cultural environment is impacting on entrepreneurial emergence in Nigeria.
- iii Promote an understanding of the enormous opportunities for entrepreneurial emergence (entrepreneurship) which the Nigerian environment provides, while recognizing its limiting factors.
- iv. Provide a window for scholars and nations' economic managers to view and examine the many theories and controversies surrounding the role of environment with respect to entrepreneurship, industrialization and economic development in societies, drawing inferences from Nigeria.
- v. Suggest approaches and methods to optimize the realities of the Nigerian environment by potential entrepreneurs and also to highlight the need for government to look more critically into the issue of the Nigerian environment and devise approaches and methods to make it more entrepreneurship friendly and attractive.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

2.1 Concept of Socio-Cultural Environment

Socio-cultural environment in broad terms consists of both the social system and the culture of a people. It refers primarily to man created intangible elements which affect people's behaviour, relationship, perception and way of life, and their survival and existence. In other words, the social-cultural environment consists all elements, conditions and influences which shape the personality of an individual and potentially affect his attitude, disposition, behaviour, decisions and activities. Such elements include beliefs, values, attitudes, habits, forms of behaviour and life styles of persons as developed from cultural, religious, educational and social conditioning, (Bennett and Kassarian, 1972; Adeleke et.al, 2003). These elements are learned and are shared by a society and transmitted from generation to generation within that society.

Thus, social-cultural environment, in relation to entrepreneurship, can be defined as consisting of all the elements of the social system and culture of a people which positively or negatively affect and influence entrepreneurial emergence, behaviour and performance, and entrepreneurship development in general. All such elements which condition the values, thinking and action of an individual with respect to entrepreneurship comprise the social-cultural environment of entrepreneurship.

2.2 *Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Emergence*

What is entrepreneurship? And what is an entrepreneurial emergence? Entrepreneurship has been defined differently by different people. According to Meredith et. al, (1991) entrepreneurship is the process of organizing and coordinating the factors of production and taking necessary decisions to establish a business enterprise and keep it in line with the pattern of demand and market values. Hisrich and Peters (2002) define entrepreneurship as the process of creating something new, assuming the risk involved and reaping the reward attached.

In the view of Kuratko and Hodgetts (1998) entrepreneurship is more than mere creation of businesses. It involves the characteristics of seeking opportunities, taking risk beyond security, and having the tenacity to push an idea through to reality. "It is a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth by assuming major risk and providing value for some product or service which itself may not be new or unique, but requires that value must somehow be infused by the entrepreneur by securing and allocating the necessary skills and resources", (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1998).

In line with Kuratko and Hodgetts view, Akpor-Robaro (2004) defined entrepreneurship as the capacity or ability to see opportunities and from there, originate a new business idea and organize resources to implement it (innovative/creative entrepreneurship); or to organize resources in a new way to implement an existing business idea (imitative entrepreneurship). It involves creating a new product or presenting an existing product in a new way with value added. Ogundele (2000) relates entrepreneurship to the process of emergence of individuals as business owners and their behaviour with regards to business management. All of the definitions above suggest that the pivotal and critical elements in entrepreneurship are creativity, risk taking and new business formation.

Thus, entrepreneurial emergence relates to actual ownership of a business venture by an individual which results from creative thinking and opportunity seeking and risk taking to mobilize resources to take advantage of certain identified opportunities in the expectation of certain rewards. It has to do with the translation of ideas and values to a functional and working business venture. It is the transition from unemployment or salary employment/job to self employment, i.e. becoming an owner of a business. In other words, an entrepreneur has emerged when an individual becomes an owner-manager of a business enterprise i.e. he starts to operate and manage a business of his own, such that, rather than earn salary, he earns profit and rather than receives salaries from others, he pays salaries to others.

A number of factors inhibit the desire of many to own their businesses in practical terms. However, the view expressed by many in the literature is that entrepreneurial emergence can be enhanced through mentoring, behaviour modification and conditioning, learning and value orientation. These help to create the necessary entrepreneurial personality. In this regard, the socio- cultural system/environment is assigned a major role as the source from which these conditions are derived.

2.3 *Socio-Cultural Theories of Entrepreneurial Emergence*

Over the years, a number of theories have been used to explain the impact of socio-cultural environment on entrepreneurial emergence. The theories tried to explain the social and cultural characteristics which cause people to be or not to be entrepreneurs. The earliest theory on the influence of socio-cultural environment on entrepreneurship was that of Max Weber, a German sociologist. In his theory, Weber explained that society plays a big role in developing entrepreneurs. This is because the individual draws his values from the social values, mores and institutional framework within which he lives (Van de Ven, 1993). He argues that culture has great impact on the attitude and behaviour of individuals and their disposition to life. And indeed, whether or not an individual would develop and become entrepreneur would depend on his disposition and value orientation. He cited religion as an element of culture which directly influence the behaviour of individuals towards being entrepreneurs. Such religious characteristics as hard work, thrift and an ascetic life of self denial are all prescription for entrepreneurship.

Essentially, the point of Weber's theory is that the socio-cultural system in which individuals live provide a set of values from which personal values and thinking pattern of people are based, and these in turn influence the decision by individuals positively or negatively towards entrepreneurship, i.e. whether or not to be entrepreneurs. Fundamentally, social systems and culture affect the development of entrepreneurial spirit and motivation by exhibiting values that either enhance or inhibit entrepreneurship behaviour and drive amongst people.

Since the theory of Max Weber, the analysis of entrepreneurial emergence has attracted a great deal of theorizing among scholars trying to identify and explain the foundation on which entrepreneurs emerge. The general opinion is that emergence of entrepreneurs is a function of a number of motivational factors or conditions. However, there is a divided thought among scholars regarding these factors. Before now, the literature was dominated by the view that individuals who emerge as entrepreneurs are frequently individuals of a poor background, mostly with low level of education, but with a 'burning' desire for upward social mobility and recognition. Although this view seems outdated and incorrect but it makes a lot of meaning with regards to influence of social conditions in the making of an entrepreneur. Some of the newer theories include:

2.3.1 Family orientation theory

The theory posits that factors such as family background and orientation are sources for entrepreneurial characteristics and the emergence of entrepreneurs. The theory emphasized the role of the family in developing the entrepreneurial character. It is believed that the home atmosphere and values of an entrepreneurial family can provide a great deal of nurturing and support for development of entrepreneurial personality or character (Kuratko 1989). This is so because the family background of an individual is a strong influence on his values and character and therefore serves as a strong source of influence whether he would be an entrepreneur or not. "This reasoning promotes the belief that certain traits established and supported early in life will lead eventually to entrepreneurial emergence and success (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1998). However, to what extent this theory is valid is still subject to debate. This is because in reality, most off-springs of successful business people/entrepreneurs never turn out as entrepreneurs, let alone being successful entrepreneurs. Off-springs often never imbibe the entrepreneurial values of their entrepreneur parents nor even take after them as entrepreneurs, even when the parents try to make the children succeed them. Children often choose their path, therefore creating the problem of entrepreneurial succession for their entrepreneur parents. It is for this reason, among others, that family businesses often do not live on, after the exit of the originators.

2.3.2 Educational incubation theory

The educational incubation theory posits that educational development aids entrepreneurial emergence through creation of awareness and new orientation and knowledge. It is contended that societies with high level of education tend to produce more entrepreneurs than societies with less educated people. The advanced countries are cited examples of such societies. And it is for this reason that educational development has attracted increase emphasis in many societies (Kuratko and Lafollette, 1986), (Kuratko, 1989) and (Block and Stumpf, 1992).

However in contrast to the above view, certain researchers have argued against educational development as a source of entrepreneurial emergence, because they believe it inhibits the creative and challenging nature of entrepreneurship (Shapero, 1975). The argument against educational development as a source of entrepreneurial emergence and development appears to be valid because from observation of business ownership, most business ventures are not owned by people with high formal education. At best majority of them with formal education are first degree holders, and are not first class graduates. The reason is obvious. Highly educated individuals are too rational in thinking, to be comfortable with the risk of failure in owning their business. Again educational development makes people to be conscious of their status or to have a sense of status and to develop some kind of pride which does not allow them to engage in certain kind of business ventures and most often ashamed to start on very small scale as they could afford. They are therefore more comfortable with paid employment either with government establishment or with established private organisation.

Furthermore, highly educated individuals are usually hunted by the fear of the unknown to take up self employment considering the vagaries of business environment. They prefer a bird in hand to a million in the bush. They want to be at the ivory tower of a paid employment rather than owning a business themselves, with all the risk and problems that are involved. It is for these reasons that most of the small scale businesses are owned by people with no or little educational background. People who are not employable into paid jobs because of lack of education and people who believe that even when they get employed their salaries would be too meager because of their educational circumstance, to be able to meet their needs. Thus, we find that the small scale industries often regarded as the evidence of entrepreneurial society and the cornerstone of industrialization and economic development, are dominated by lowly educated people particularly in developing countries such as Africa countries.

However, in recent time the orientation is changing. A lot of graduates are beginning to think in the direction of owning their businesses and be self employed in what ever areas of business they can find opportunities. This change of attitude and orientation is basically due to the challenges of economic realities in terms of unemployment, which have confronted them in present times, leaving them with no alternatives for survival, other than self employment. There is no doubt that educational programmes in entrepreneurship for members of the public such as workshops, seminars, motivational talks, conferences and inclusion of entrepreneurship in schools curriculum, have had a lot of impact in the change of orientation towards business ownership but nevertheless, as it has been shown, it is not education in its general form that account for such change.

2.3.3 Displacement theory

This school of thought is based on effects of group dynamics. It holds that group dynamics generate certain displacements that drive an individual into an entrepreneurial venture. Two major types of displacement identified in the socio-cultural environment include cultural displacement and economic displacement (Ronstadt, 1984). "Cultural displacement is the preclusion from certain jobs or professional fields as a result of cultural factors such as ethnic background, religion, race

and sex". When individuals face discrimination due to these factors and are prevented from being engaged in certain fields, they are forced to exercise the only alternative open to them, that is, to turn towards entrepreneurial venture.

Economic displacement is concerned with the economic variations of recession and depression (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 1989). Essentially, economic displacement is caused by the various changes that tend to affect the economy negatively, and therefore the economic status of the individual by way of job loss (retrenchment), capital shrinkage and new economic situations that are positive or favourable and supportive of business ventures. Any of these can serve as foundation for entrepreneurial pursuit or emergence.

The displacement school of thought is apparently true for most entrepreneurs in many societies. Many people who have become entrepreneurs have become so due to displacement circumstances particularly due to unavailability of jobs or job loss in the case of those who were engaged before their predicament.

2.3.4 Pull-push theory

This theory posits that entrepreneurial motivation and emergence is mainly influenced by incubational factors relating to previous work experience, either positive or negative, in organizations or companies in which the individual has been employed. Such factors are categorized into two closely related groups, viz, the Pull factors and the Push factors, (Gilad and Levine, 1986) thus distinguishing between two groups of entrepreneurs, i.e. those who were pulled into starting up a business and those who were Pushed into it.

Pull factors are positive factors and provide positive motives for setting up business. Entrepreneurs in this category have objectives which are self oriented, enabling them to fulfill personal ambitions rather than solely financial gain. They are in business to demonstrate their personal capabilities to others and to gain independence and 'be their own boss' (Boer et. al, 1997). On the contrary, the push factors are negative factors and therefore provide negative motive for starting a business. Entrepreneurs in the push category are individuals who have negative experiences in their economic life and are pushed into owning a business as a means of escape and protection, for example, protection from unemployment by individuals who are unable to find jobs or appropriate jobs, low income position, or dependence nature of salary employment.

Some analysts of the 'pull' and 'push' factors dichotomy have observed that the 'push' entrepreneurs are less successful than the 'pull' entrepreneurs. They have argued that, this so, because, 'push' entrepreneurs often place their personal remuneration above the longer term survival of their enterprise. Therefore, they are more susceptible to closing the business down rather than compromising their lifestyles if the business is not providing expected monetary reward. This argument is supported by the research of Hamilton (1987) who identified that individuals in the involuntary 'push' business exhibit a higher rate of failure and employment growth than those in the voluntary 'pull' business (Boer, et. al, 1997).

3. Analytical Method

The method of analysis is qualitative, and it is based essentially on a theoretical survey of the features of the Nigerian socio-cultural environment, and a discussion of their implications for entrepreneurial emergence. The framework consists of two levels of analysis. The first level considers the Nigerian orthodox culture and social features, while the second level considers the Nigerian contemporary culture and social features based on cultural analysis models by Hofstede (1984 and 1991), Trompenaar (1993), and Schwartz (1992 and 1994). At both levels, a cross cultural comparative analysis of tribes in Nigeria was undertaken to determine how the prevalent culture of each tribe impairs and militates against entrepreneurship or motivates and enhances entrepreneurial drive and growth. Also, an inter-temporal analysis of Nigerian socio-cultural experience viz a vis entrepreneurial emergence is undertaken to determine the influence of the features of the Nigerian socio-cultural environment on the emergence of entrepreneurs in each period. The survey method is a blend of scattered observations and some qualified reasoning where a number of characteristics of the Nigerian socio-cultural environment are considered to illustrate the relationship and the role of the Nigeria environment in either enhancing or hindering entrepreneurial emergence.

4. Analysis and Discussion

A survey of the Nigerian socio-cultural environment under the two levels specified above reveals that the Nigerian society is characterized by number of features which have influenced entrepreneurial emergence either positively or negatively. Evidence of the impact of Nigerian socio-cultural system on entrepreneurship is provided by the inter-temporal level of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, and the apparent disparity in entrepreneurial engagement among the various Nigerian tribes, particularly the three major tribes. The differences reflect the socio-cultural features of Nigeria in time, and the differences in the socio-cultural features of the tribes. These features are presented and discussed under the two levels as follows:

4.1 *Level One: Nigerian Orthodox culture and Social features*

Major features identified under this category include traditional beliefs and value system, fatalistic attitude, religiosity, high external locus of control, and social problems such as literacy (education) level, and poverty resulting from high unemployment or joblessness among people. It is observed that these value elements account largely for the level of entrepreneurial emergence in Nigeria as indicated by the level of industrialization and economic growth and development in contrast with countries in Europe and America.

4.1.1 Level of education

One factor of interest in Nigerian social reality which has impacted entrepreneurial emergence among Nigerians is the general level of education. There is a contrast between the situation in the past and the present. In the past the demand for education was low because of the low value attached to education by many families as an immediate means of wealth creation and also because of financial cost involvement. Bulk of the population, therefore took, mainly to trading, craft, farming and vocations, and the number of people who owned businesses of some sort, relative to the country's population was high. The situation, thus, facilitated the emergence of entrepreneurs during the period. The size of educated population was small and was able to secure employment in the available industries and the public sector (civil service). Because unemployment didn't exist, formally educated persons didn't see it worthwhile to create businesses for themselves and be self employed.

The current situation is that there is an increased value for education, therefore, the desire and demand for education at all levels by Nigerian society, have risen, resulting in tremendous increase in the size of educated population in Nigeria. Ironically, as the society's demand for education increases and people get more educated, it is observed that the volume of business ownership relative to the total population is reducing. This feature implies that higher education is affecting negatively entrepreneurial emergence in Nigeria. The plausible explanation for this situation is that people with high education are more desirous seeking job placement in existing industries than creating new businesses of their own from small beginning. They consider it unbecoming to start small, but yet they cannot start big because they lack what it takes. It is also viewed that in self employment considering the challenges of business and the vagaries of the Nigerian environment, success is not certain and may be at slow rate. Working for a big company promises more certainty of income and faster in placing one comfortably without having to toil.

Evidently, the Nigerian educated person does not only suffer status complex but also has a phobia for failure which makes him to shy away from engaging in entrepreneurship believed to be characterized with risk. Hence there are far more people with no or less education owning businesses than people with high level education. Even among graduates, the top class are hardly in business of their own. The task of entrepreneurship requires both humility and courage as essential ingredients. By and large, what this observation suggests is that a literate society does not automatically translate to an entrepreneurial society. The Nigerian experience/situation with respect to the education factor lends credence to the arguments in the educational incubation theory. What this suggests is that, it is not the general formal education that turns out entrepreneurs, but specialized entrepreneurship education with emphasis on vocational/technical training and skill acquisition, and supported with the provision of enabling infrastructures.

4.1.2 Poverty

This is a social feature in Nigeria which has had both positive and negative influence on entrepreneurial emergence. The general level of poverty in Nigeria society has within certain limit galvanized a large proportion of the poor population into entrepreneurship. While beyond this positive effect level, it has produced inhibiting effect on entrepreneurial emergence by the abjectly poor people. However apparently the positive influence outweighs the negative influence considering the number of people who have been pushed into entrepreneurship out of the need to survive and get out of poverty compared to the number of people who may have been inhibited by their poverty level(lack of fund). Even for those who are pushed into entrepreneurship due to poverty the extent or size and nature of their activities is still limited and determined by their levels of financial strength. Thus in reality the general state of poverty in the society has more negative than positive effect on emergence of entrepreneurs.

A major cause of poverty in Nigeria is the high unemployment level in Nigeria society. In the past, jobs were extant and people, especially the educated had no need for self employment since they could get well paid job at ease. But in recent time, experience of unemployment has pushed people to think entrepreneurship and the creation of ones own business as the only alternative for survival by people irrespective of their educational background. As a result of the socio-economic hardship and embarrassment of unemployment, many people have changed their orientation and values in favour of entrepreneurship particularly since the 1990s. It is observed that since then there has been an increase in business ownership in general and within the educated class in particular, especially small and medium scale businesses.

This is clearly evident among the youths who are the worst hit by the country's unemployment situation. One would observe that there are more youths who now than ever before own businesses in all aspects of industry. The growth in the service, fashion and hospitality/entertainment industries as well as commerce, is a testament to this. Impliedly, the current social problem of unemployment has influenced positively the emergence of entrepreneurs particularly among the educated youths of Nigeria. Due to unemployment there has been a paradigm shift among the youths towards self employment. These realities are an exemplification of the 'pull' argument and the economic argument respectively, of the 'pull-push' and the displacement theory of entrepreneurial emergence.

4.1.3 Value for economic power and independence

The Ibo culture contains a high value for economic power and independence, a value trait which is also found among some of the south-south tribes. Financial wealth is highly cherished in Ibo culture. It is the basis for social recognition and status. And among the Ibos, it is generally believed that self employment (running ones own business) provides faster means to be wealthy and thus, confers higher economic power and independence. This cultural characteristic propels an average Igbo person to want to engage in self employment than work for others. These traits are less present in the Hausa and Yoruba tribes. It is observed that on account of this feature associated with them, the Ibos are more entrepreneurial and business inclined, owning businesses much more than the Yorubas and the Hausas. The Yorubas are placed second in this ranking before the Hausas..

4.1.4 Gender role values

The evidence of socio-cultural influence on entrepreneurship is also visible from the point of view of entrepreneurship among women in Nigeria. Generally, the role of men and women in various environment varies widely. Certainly, in many societies women do not enjoy parity with men as participants in the economy. The extent to which they are allowed to participate in economic activities affects their drive to become entrepreneurs. Also, values about family role for men and women affect entrepreneurial emergence generally, and between men and women. Values about family role determine how families divide responsibilities for the provision of economic wellbeing of the family unit. This varies among cultures. While in some societies and cultures the men are given the total role of bread winners and the women restricted to home keeping, in other societies the bread winner role is borne by both the man and the woman, thus allowing the woman a space to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

In Nigeria, the socio-cultural system is gender discriminatory in terms of economic engagement. The traditional belief about the position and role of women do not allow women to engage in serious economic activities and thus, places a limit on the entrepreneurial drive of women in Nigeria. It is believed that the woman's role is in the home and engaging in activities outside the home is going against norms and values of the Nigerian culture and tradition. This belief system has accounted for the low level of entrepreneurship among Nigerian women particularly in the past. In other words, Nigerian women suffer a kind of displacement from economic activities as result of cultural beliefs with regards to gender roles and other factors. Although the situation appears to have improved due to increase enlightenment and awareness, and the challenges of economic realities of today faced by the family unit, one observes that, the level of participation in entrepreneurial activities by Nigerian women in relation to men is still very low. However, the degree of disparity varies among tribes depending on the level of permissiveness allowed by the culture of each tribe.

A comparative analysis of entrepreneurial engagement and business ownership among women in Nigeria reveals that women of the northern tribes are less involved in entrepreneurial activities than those of the southern tribes. A major reason for this, is that the northern tribes have not let go substantially the traditional belief that a woman is not to be seen outside. The culture of the main tribes- Hausa/ Fulani and Tiv- still portrays the woman as an indoor person who is never to have interaction with the public, particularly male genders, based on religious grounds. Therefore, to allow women own and run businesses is to allow them interact with the public and to be counter cultural. This cultural belief has negative influence on entrepreneurial drive among women in the north of Nigeria. Even within the south of Nigeria there is great disparity in entrepreneurial drive by women of the different tribes. For instance, the Ibo women are observed to be more entrepreneurially active than their Yoruba counterparts and women of the south- south non Ibo speaking tribes. This is explained partly, by the fact that, yorubas are culturally more disposed towards educating females than the Ibos and Hausas and therefore making Yoruba women more endowed for formal/ paid employment than their Ibo and Hausa counterparts. Thus while Yoruba women seek paid job, their less educationally privileged Ibo and Hausa counterparts take to self employment to earn their living. This is coupled with their general belief in self employment as the quickest means to realize economic empowerment and independence.

Considering the similarities between the Ibos and the south – south tribes in value for economic independence one expects entrepreneurship among women in the south – south tribes to be relatively high. But this is not so. The low level of entrepreneurship among women of the south- south, particularly among the non Ibo speaking tribes can be

attributed to the general belief among their men that business women are prone to sexual abuse by men. This makes them to discourage women from business activities to prevent them being in contact with men.

There might not be existing empirical evidence to support these observations/explanations, and again current circumstances will have changed the values of the tribes and blurred the areas of distinctions among them, but the observations are germane to what existed among the tribes in a few years back. These situations are explained by the values which these tribes imbibed from the religions which existed in these societies in the past. While the orthodox churches such as the catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Apostolic and Seventh Day Adventist churches dominated the Ibo society and the south-south, the Yoruba society has a mixed grill of these orthodox churches and the Islamic faith. Whereas, the Hausa/Fulani society was dominated by the Islamic faith. There is no doubt that these religions had affected the value system of these societies and this accordingly accounts for the disparity in the development of entrepreneurship spirit in these societies. In conclusion, the Nigerian situation as may also be found in other African societies leads credence to the theory of Max Weber.

4.2 *Level Two: Nigerian Contemporary culture and Social features*

Using the contemporary models of cultural analysis of Hofstede (1984 and 1991), Trompenaar (1993), Schwartz (1992 and 1994), the Nigerian socio-culture can be said to possess the following features with varying degrees among sub-cultures of Nigerian society.

4.2.1 High uncertainty avoidance

Nigerians generally feel threatened by ambiguous situation and always try to avoid such situations. They exhibit a cautious approach to risk and a high degree of angst in the face of uncertain future. Simply, Nigerians are very apprehensive about future uncertainty and try very hard to avoid it. Because of the high measure of uncertainty avoidance by Nigerians, there is greater willingness by them to maintain a status quo, e.g. to stay working as a paid worker. The implication of this for entrepreneurial emergence maybe positive or negative depending on individuals and the nature of the element of risk being avoided and judgment about the risk level involved. For instance, uncertainty about business success (fear of business failure) and regular income can inhibit entrepreneurial interest of an individual, but for existing business owners, it can galvanize them into more action. While uncertainty about the current economic state to guarantee one's desired future can motivate one into entrepreneurship.

Essentially, socio-cultural development of a society can be represented in a continuum, between low level (traditional) society at one end and high level (modern) society at the other end. As a society moves from the lower end of the continuum to the upper end, it experiences a transition from low uncertainty avoidance to high uncertainty avoidance, with a positive effect/reinforcement on entrepreneurship development. Both high and low uncertainty avoidance can have both positive effects and negative effects on entrepreneurship, depending on the stage of socio-cultural development, awareness and values of the given society, i.e. its position on the continuum of socio-cultural development. For instance at the lowest level of the continuum, low uncertainty avoidance results in less anxiety about the future and consequently, reduces entrepreneurial motivation and drive among people within that stage of socio-cultural development. As the society moves up the continuum beyond that stage, low uncertainty avoidance results in more anxiety about the future and therefore increases entrepreneurial motivation and drive, as a result of the desire to survive and the need to achieve. At this level of development, fear of failure tend to be conquered and people appreciate more the role of entrepreneurship engagement in guaranteeing them a better future economy and changing their social status. At this stage of socio-cultural awareness people engage in entrepreneurship to guarantee their future welfare. Thus, societies at the highest stage on the continuum tend more to high uncertainty avoidance about future socio-economic welfare than societies at the primitive stage or lower level of the socio-cultural development continuum. A major reason for this is the desire to sustain the achievement made so far. Such societies produce more entrepreneurs than others.

The Nigerian culture generally has moved from low uncertainty avoidance to high uncertainty avoidance particularly with respect economic engagement, but with many of the sub-cultures still within the zone of negative reinforcement. However, the degree of uncertainty avoidance among the sub-cultures varies from one ethnic group to another. The Hausa/Fulani culture apparently ranks lowest among the ethnic cultures in this regard. The South-South and the Yoruba cultures fall between the Hausa/Fulani and the Ibo cultures, with South-South ranking higher.

4.2.2 Low individualism (High collectivism)

In Nigeria people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups from which members tend to derive some measure of economic protection throughout their lifetime. In other words, strong ties exist between individuals which allows for interdependence among people. This is evident in Nigerian system of extended family. This contrasts with an individualist socio-cultural system with loose ties between people and hence everyone is expected to look after himself/herself and only the immediate family. High individualism cultural orientation engenders entrepreneurial drive

because individuals are more self dependent, exhibiting high spirit of independence, self initiative and motivation. Collectivism, on the other hand, has negative implications for entrepreneurship because it causes low spirit of independence, self initiative, motivation, internal locus of control and self dependence. Among Nigerian sub-cultures, the degree of collectivism is highest in the Hausa/Fulani culture than the Yoruba and Ibo cultures. The Ibo culture is most individualist, only ranking below the South-South ethnic groups. In addition to other factors this has contributed to the differences in entrepreneurial drive and emergence among these tribes.

4.2.3 Achievement oriented

The Nigerian culture generally before now was predominantly an ascription culture, except for the Ibo culture which even before now has been substantially an achievement culture but with emphasis on financial wealth achievement. The present Nigerian collective culture, however, can be described as an achievement culture. This is because the Nigerian society generally has substantially shifted from ascription culture to an achievement culture in which status is conferred based on ones achievement rather than such features as age, gender, caste, religious position, e.t.c. Nevertheless, the extent of achievement oriented of Nigerian culture varies among the sub-cultures, with Ibo culture ranking highest, followed by the South-South, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani, in that order. The implication of this for entrepreneurial emergence is apparent. It acts as a stimulant for entrepreneurs emergence. An ascription culture does not provide encouragement for entrepreneurship. This is evident with the Nigerian entrepreneurship situation where comparatively the level of entrepreneurship appears lower in the past when the culture was predominantly ascription vis-à-vis the current situation with a higher level of entrepreneurship across subcultures with a shift of values towards achievement culture. This is also visible in the entrepreneurial drive of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

4.2.4 Masculinity

The Nigerian culture is currently a high masculine culture unlike in the past when it was more feminine. It is characterized by such features as assertiveness, competitiveness and toughness. There are three major results of this cultural orientation and these are strong achievement motivation (need for achievement), Achievement defined in terms of wealth and recognition, and Gender based occupational segregation. Both of these have implications for entrepreneurial emergence. The first two elements have positive implications while the third element has negative implications. Inter-cultural comparison shows that the degree of masculinity among the Nigerian subcultures varies substantially, with the Ibo culture ranking highest and Hausa/Fulani culture ranking lowest on the continuum. The south-south cultures rank next to the Ibo culture.

4.2.5 Conservation

The Nigerian culture generally is highly characterized by “conservation” as against “Openness to change.” Cultures characterized by “openness to change” facilitate entrepreneurial emergence because such cultures motivate people to follow their autonomous inner-directed interests in uncertain directions. This results in self direction and stimulation value types, (Gbadamosi, 2004). On the other hand, conservation cultures limit the desire and quest for change, thwart creativity and entrepreneurial initiative and drive. This is because such cultures motivate individuals towards outer-directed avoidance of uncertainty to preserve the status quo in entrenched relationships with close others, institutions and traditions, (Gbadamosi, 2004). The implications and impact of this cultural feature are evident in the differences in entrepreneurial drive and emergence among the various tribes of Nigeria. Apparently, the Hausa/Fulani culture is the most conservative and evidently the least entrepreneurial among the tribal groupings.

From inter-temporal comparison of Nigerian social behaviour it is noticeable that the Nigerian socio-cultural system is gradually shifting from the old order characterized by collectivism, low uncertainty avoidance, ascription, femininity, and conservation to a culture of high uncertainty avoidance, achievement oriented, high individualism, masculinity, “openness to change.” The emerging culture has no doubt impacted on entrepreneurial emergence in Nigeria. This is evident from observed growth in the number of businesses in recent time compared to the past, under the traditional culture.

5. Conclusion

The analyses revealed primarily that socio-cultural factors can influence both positively and negatively entrepreneurial emergence in a society. The references in the analysis confirm opinions in the theories of entrepreneurial emergence which are rooted in the theory of social behavior which explains that socio-cultural values and circumstances of a people would influence their behaviour and decisions as a people and as individuals not only in terms of their social lives but also in their economic lives and this includes their decisions about entrepreneurship. An individual, although is a unique personality, he is nevertheless a product of his society. He is subject to the values and influences of his society. In other words socio-cultural environment has significant impact in shaping individual values which directly influence his decisions and actions in all endeavours.

In the case of Nigeria, It is evident that the socio-cultural environment has impact on entrepreneurial emergence in Nigeria. Specifically, the analyses revealed that the socio-cultural environment of Nigeria is characterized by a myriad of features which in some cases have provided impetus for entrepreneurial emergence and in other cases acted as limitation to emergence of entrepreneurs. The evidence of the role of socio-cultural environment in entrepreneurial emergence is shown from the findings of the comparative analysis of the socio-cultural values and circumstances of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria vis-à-vis their level of interest and participation in entrepreneurial endeavours. The evidence of socio-cultural impact on entrepreneurship is also provided in the gender analysis of entrepreneurial emergence both in absolute and comparative terms. Furthermore, inter-temporal analysis of values and social circumstances of Nigerians vis-à-vis the state of entrepreneurship in Nigeria also revealed the influence of socio-cultural factors on entrepreneurs.

However, it is instructive to note that contrary to popular opinion that the Nigeria socio-cultural environment only exert negative influence on entrepreneurial emergence, the study findings indicate that a number of the socio-cultural factors, although may be negative phenomena in themselves, they nevertheless provide the push for people to become entrepreneurs and thus providing positive influence on entrepreneurial emergence. Also instructive to note is the fact that in the Nigerian socio-cultural environment, there are more negative factors pushing people into entrepreneurship than positive factors pulling people into entrepreneurship. In other words, the Nigerian potential entrepreneur is confronted more with “Push” factors than “Pull” factors. This implies that majority of entrepreneurs in Nigeria are “Push” entrepreneurs and therefore suffer from problems implied in “Push” influence or which attend “Push” factors in terms of entrepreneurial behaviour as suggested in the “Push-Pull” theory of entrepreneurial emergence.

The evidence from Nigeria on entrepreneurship growth in recent years in many areas of the economy indicates that people are beginning to take advantage of the “Push” factors i.e. converting the weaknesses in the society to advantages and opportunities to launch themselves into entrepreneurship. Instead of being held down by such negative situations, people are being tasked in their intellect and competitive and creative abilities. The evidence from Nigeria is instructive to other societies particularly of Africa which have been disadvantaged in their socio-cultural values and circumstances with respect to their influence on entrepreneurship development and economic growth. Obviously, there has been an apparent problem of lethargy among African people with respect to entrepreneurship, caused by the dictates of their cultures, which have before now kept them as non industrialized societies. This situation is greatly improving with new realities and changing values in many societies. This is evidenced by the new entrepreneurial spirit among Nigerians in the last ten years.

6. Recommendations

The study revelations on the impact of socio-cultural environment on entrepreneurship poses a challenge about the need for the Nigerian society to have new values and orientation favourable to entrepreneurship and emergence of entrepreneurs. Furthermore, there is also the need to manage the current socio-cultural environment based on its silver content such that the weaknesses and negative factors are converted to opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures and business ownership. In furtherance of this, it is recommended that an overhaul of the Nigerian socio-cultural system and a reengineering of its societal values be undertaken to get people out of the traditional ties, negative attitudes and behavioural pattern, to develop a new set of positive values that attract and facilitate entrepreneurial emergence by Nigerians irrespective of gender. To achieve this the following specific steps must be taken:

- * Individuals, families and ethnic groups must engage in thorough self examination and assessment to ascertain and determine the relevance of existing values and socio cultural system to their economic progress and wellbeing, and select and retain only those values that are capable of helping society to achieve its economic progress and development goals through the enhancement of entrepreneurial emergence, and discontinue with values that do not allow individuals to actualize their potentials and explore opportunities for profitable economic engagement.
- * Government on its part must set an agenda for a positively changing social behaviour and societal expectation. It must come to terms with the new world order of values and the trend around the world, and be committed to enthroning societal values and behaviour that are consistent with requirements for economic progress and independence for individuals. There cannot be any meaningful social reengineering and value reorientation without the committed involvement of government and leaders of thought in society.
- * Government must evolve comprehensive enlightenment programmes to enable people know the new values, appreciate their essence, cherish them and key into them, and habitually act on them. This can be achieved through the establishment of socio-cultural orientation and change agencies that consist of sociologists and psychologists who can design and implement relevant and effective value reengineering and reorientation programmes that can usher in and inculcate in individuals and groups a new set of desirable values.

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