

An Assessment of the Cultural Constraints Affecting Women's Performance in Small Scale Businesses: Case of Shiraqle Market in Hargeisa, Somaliland

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Abstract

Small scale businesses have been recognised by many Governments as a sector that boosts economic growth of a country and alleviates poverty of families. The Purpose of this study was to assess the cultural constraints which affect women carrying out small scale businesses in Shiraqle market, in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Social feminist theory was used to explain the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The total population of the study comprised of 500 small scale business women in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa, Somaliland and the study derived a sample size of fifty (50). The study's sampling technique that was used was purposive sampling. Data collection was done by use of the Likert scale questionnaire and regression analysis was done to determine the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables by the aid of the SPSS. The study made the following conclusions: women carrying out small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa, Somaliland lack the capacity to make economic decisions at the family level and thus cannot decide to reinvest profits into their small businesses to expand the business without consulting their spouses or even freely spend their business profits without the knowledge of the husband. They are also hindered by their male relatives from travelling far and wide to look for stocks for their businesses, unless if they are accompanied by a male relative. The male dominant culture is an hindrance to the performance and growth of women's small scale businesses in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

1. Introduction

In earlier years (before 1988's), Somali women's activities revolved around household chores and taking care of their children: But after the civil war in Somalia women had to start venturing into economic activities in order to sustain their families (Dr. Abdel and Ali, 2013). The civil war caused immense suffering, material loses and widespread displacement of families. Social values were eroded and roles and responsibilities within the family setting underwent major fundamental changes such that Somali women had to become entrepreneurs to sustain themselves and their children. This paper will assess the cultural constraints which affect Somali women performance in small scale businesses in Shiraqle market, Hargeisa. The small business sector in Somaliland is recognized as an integral component of economic development and crucial element in the effort to lift families and the country out of poverty (Sirajo and Ladan, 2014).

2. Background of the study

Women's small scale business owners contribute enormously to a country's economic growth, job creation and alleviation of poverty. For example as of 2014 it was established that there were nearly 9.1 million women owned businesses in USA generating over 1.4 trillion in revenues and employing nearly 7.9 million people (the state of women owned business; American express open, 2014). Prior research has also recorded that small scale enterprises play a significant role in the economy of a country and that efficiency of small scale businesses is closely associated with the efficiency of the country: In Pakistan, small size businesses account for the great majority of the total business in the country (Javed *et al*, 2011). In India, according to international finance corporation (World Bank group) in partnership with the government of Japan in 2012, around 3 million women owned enterprises represent about 10% of all small macro enterprises in the country and they employ over 8 million people. Therefore in India women entrepreneurship is largely skewed towards smaller size firms (Ejan *et al*, 2014). In Tanzania women owned small businesses are part of the solution to achieving economic growth and pulling the family and the nation out of poverty (Mashene and Rumanyika, 2014). Most women owned small scale enterprises in Somaliland resulted out of unsatisfied household subsistence needs after the economic crises that faced households after the civil war. After this crises house-holds faced difficulties in feeding families, paying for clothing and other basic necessities. These problems warranted women to start trading in small scale

businesses.

3. Theoretical framework

Liberal feminism theory

Liberal feminism theory focuses on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. It argues that society holds the false belief that women are by nature, less intellectual than men and physically less capable than men. Thus this theory tends to discriminate against women in the education, social forums, and in the marketplace. Liberal feminists believe that "female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks women's entrance to the public world and also hinders their success in the men dominated fields. The theory posits that women do not command much say before men and that they strive for sexual equality via down-to-earth political and legal reforms (Tong, 2013). The theory argues that individualistic assumptions and social structures in a society contribute to societal values which discriminate against women (Bryson, 1999). However the critics of the feminist theory appreciates that there has been a "metamorphosis" of women into men in the sense that dependence of women upon men is gradually changing even in the earlier patriarchal states (Janice, 2003). The liberal feminist theory focuses on the individual, and in doing so, disregards the importance of the community and traditional values.

In Somaliland, it is traditionally believed that women contribution in business world is something against the culture. Culturally the only thing Somali women were undertaking was caring for their children and undertaking house chores such as cooking and milking their cattle and camels. However because of the civil war in the 1980s Somalis faced many problems such as hunger, and draughts. During the civil war Somali women begun to take care of themselves and also their children while participating and starting different kind of business. The main purpose of this paper was to examine the cultural constraints faced by small scale women entrepreneurs in Shiraque market in Hargeisa region of Somaliland and to assess how these challenges effect these women entrepreneurs performance in their small enterprises.

4. Literature review

Women in Somaliland are not culturally socialized to become independent economic decision makers at the family level. Instead Somaliland people are traditionally socialized to belief that women contribution in business is something against the Somali culture (UNICEF, 2002). The Somali women are culturally expected to undertake domestic roles which include taking care of children, milking camels and cows, cooking and other household chores as the men are engaged in economic activities to support and feed their families. However this culture started to give way after the Somali civil war of 1980s: The war which saw Somaliland breaking away from the larger Somalia and becoming an independent country (Balthasar, 2013). After this civil war, family members were scattered, separated from each other and devastated. The war brought about a lot of suffering and hunger, and this is the time when Somaliland women started to embrace entrepreneurship which led them into starting small scale businesses for their economic security, and to be able to take care of themselves and their children. Entrepreneurship in a woman emerges from an individual creative spirit which leads one into business ownership for economic security (Hilson and Hilson, 2015).

The Somaliland's male dominance culture creates problems for female entrepreneurs in terms of limiting their mobility, business participation and market interactions (Dr. Abdel and Ali, 2013). Lack of cultural socialization for women to become independent economic decision makers in Somaliland has led to gender-based discrimination: This has become a constraint which hinders women in small scale businesses from performing better in their businesses (UNDP, 2013). Small scale business women in Shiraqle market face challenging business interactions due to gender and dependence upon their male counterparts for business transactions. This makes women to experience greater constraints on their economic actions relative to men (Chinonye and Roy, 2010). The lack of cultural socialization of women as independent economic decision makers' has limited women entrepreneurs' ability to take advantage of opportunities available to them in their environment (Sharafu *et al*, 2014). In Somaliland, there exists a cultural belief that the private sector is reserved for men (UNDP, 2013). The cultural bias against women restrict their freedom of movement because in Islam the movement of women requires the permission of husbands or male guardians and in travelling for business purpose she requires permission from her *muhran* (husband, father brother or uncle), and this restricts small scale business women from travelling far and wide looking for stocks of trade (UNICEF, 2002).

5. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research designs to identify and describe the cultural constraints faced by small scale business women in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa, Somaliland. The study took a description of the cultural experiences which the small scale women traders go through as they carry out their businesses in Shiraqle market. The target population comprised of the women in small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa, Somaliland who were 500 in number. A sample of 50 women was drawn from the total population which

translated to 10% of the total population. Primary data was collected through semi structured questionnaires which were used to collect factual information. Means, standard deviation, percentages and frequency distribution of the independent variables were calculated.

6. Findings and Interpretations

Several statements were given to respondents and they were asked to give responses expressing their opinions regarding the statements. The findings of the responses were presented in tables, graphs and charts and their interpretations were given.

6.1 Somaliland Women not Socialized to be Economic Decision Makers

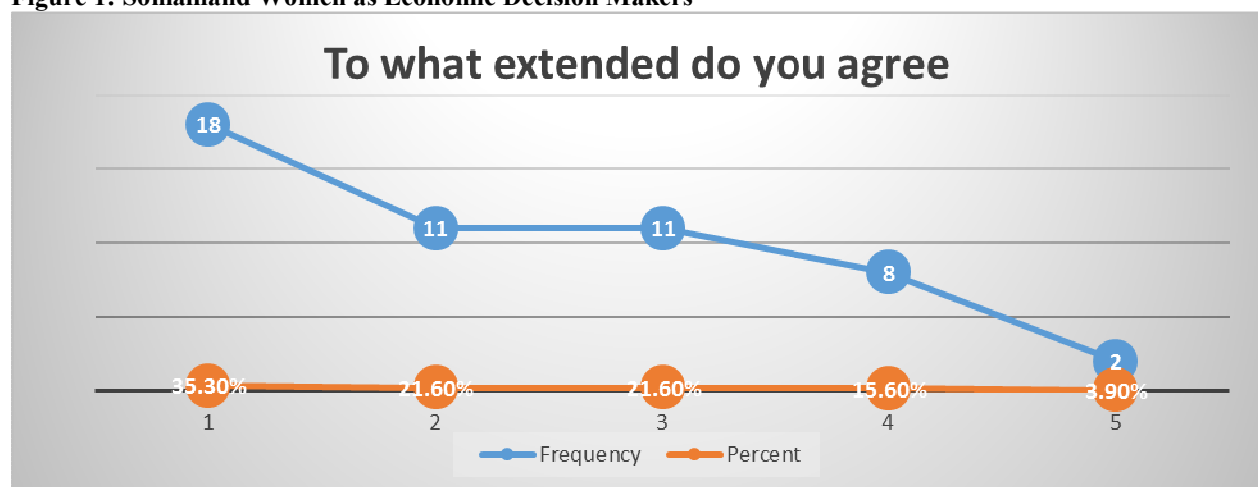
The participants were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the above statement and the results were presented in the table below:

Table 1: Somaliland Women Not socialized as Economic Decision Makers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	very good extend	18	35.3	36.0	36.0
	good extended	11	21.6	22.0	58.0
	moderate extend	11	21.6	22.0	80.0
	little extend	8	15.7	16.0	96.0
	very little extend	2	3.9	4.0	100.0
Total	50	98.0	100.0		
Missing	System	0	2.0		
Total	50	100.0			

Source: field data, 2015

Figure 1: Somaliland Women as Economic Decision Makers



Source: field data, 2015

From the above graph 35.5% suggested it was to a very good extent that they agreed to the statement that Somaliland women are not culturally socialized to become independent economic decision makers at the family level. 21.6% of the respondents indicated that they agreed to a moderate extent and 15.7% said it's only to a little extent that they agreed to the statement. This can be interpreted to mean that the Somaliland women who own small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa were not culturally socialized to become economic decision makers at the family level. The researcher has interpreted this to mean that most of these women were not culturally trained to be businesswomen but circumstances have forced them into business.

6.3 Male Dominant Culture Limits Women Participation in Business

Somaliland's male dominant culture creates problems for female entrepreneurs in terms of limiting their mobility and business participation. The responses to this statement are as follows:

Table 3: Male Dominant Culture Limits Women Participation in Business

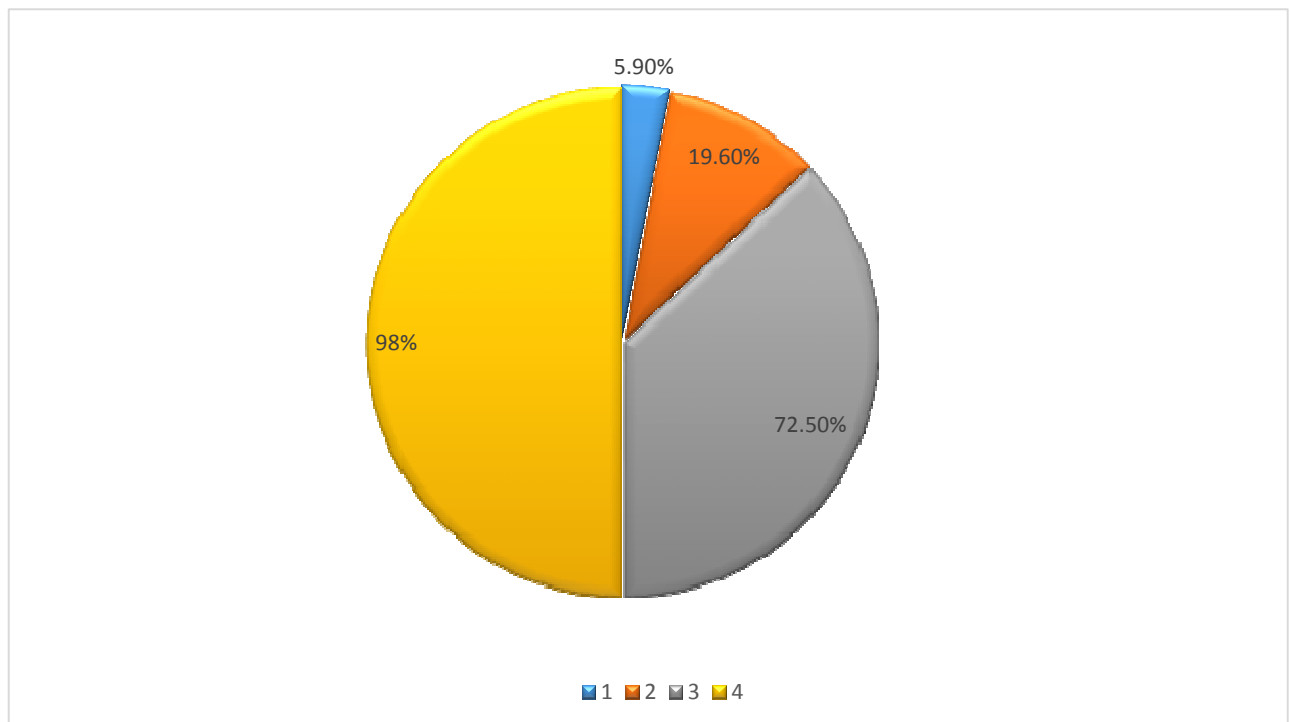


Table 5: Women in Shiraqle Market Depend on Males for Business Transaction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	strongly disagree	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	disagree	4	7.8	8.0	10.0
	don't know	1	2.0	2.0	12.0
	agree	15	29.4	30.0	42.0
	strongly agree	29	56.9	58.0	100.0
Total	50	98.0	100.0		
Missing	System	0	2.0		
Total	50	100.0			

Source: field data, 2015

As can be seen from the table and the pie chart above, the male dominance in culture creates problems for women entrepreneurs in terms limiting their mobility during business participation. 72.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement and 19.6% of the respondents agreed, while 5.9% disagreed. It means that culturally men in Somaliland can hinder the movement of women and hence affect their performance in their small scale businesses. This is because businesses require owners to be free to move about looking for supplies and also marketing their stock.

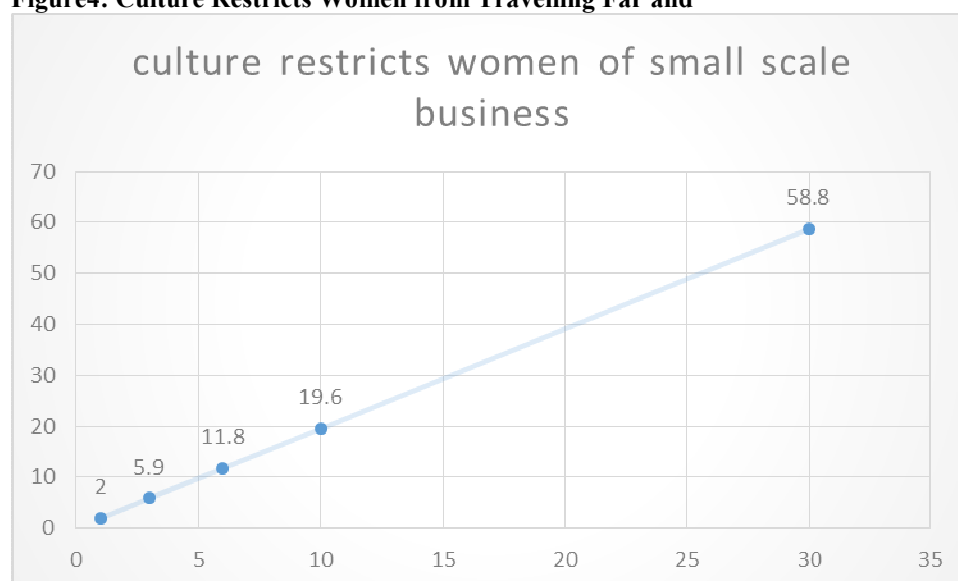
6.4 Somaliland culture restricts small scale business women from travelling far and wide looking for stocks for trade

Table 4: Culture restricts Women from Travelling Far and Wide

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	0	2.0	2.0	2.0
strongly agree	1	2.0	2.0	3.9
disagree	6	11.8	11.8	15.7
Valid don't know	3	5.9	5.9	21.6
agree	10	19.6	19.6	41.2
strongly agree	30	58.8	58.8	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2015

Figure4: Culture Restricts Women from Travelling Far and



Source: field data, 2015

According to above diagram and table, the Somaliland culture restricts small scale business women from travelling far and wide looking for stocks of trade. This is because 58.8% women owners of small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa, Somaliland strongly agreed to the statement that Somaliland culture restricts small scale business women from travelling far and wide looking for stocks for trade, 19.6% agreed and 5.9% said they don't know.

Cultural challenges facing women in small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

Cultural challenge	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Lack of cultural socialization to be economic decision makers	50	4.38	0.789
Male dominant culture and the belief that business world is a domain for men	50	4.94	0.630
Hindered mobility for women by the male relatives	50	4.85	0.628
Dependence on male counterparts for business transactions	50	4.84	0.592

Source: Author (2015)

The above table sought to establish the challenges faced by women in small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa, Somaliland. The average responses on the research variables: Lack of cultural socialization to be economic decision makers, male dominant culture and the belief that business world is a domain for men, hindered mobility for women by the male relatives, and dependence on male counterparts for business transactions were 4.38, 4.94, 4.85 and 4.84. By computing the respective standard deviations the researcher found out that the responses lay between 4 and 5. This implied that the listed challenges are common to women in small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa as most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there existed the above challenges in these businesses.

Regression Analysis Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.935 ^a	.873	.894	.432

Adjusted R squared is coefficient of determination which tell us the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable, from the findings in the above table the value of adjusted R squared was 0.894 an indication that there was variation of 89.4% on organisation performance due to changes in the independent variables which were : Lack of cultural socialization to be economic decision makers, male dominant culture and the belief that business world is a domain for men, hindered mobility for women by the male relatives, and dependence on male counterparts for business transactions. This shows that 89.4% changes in performance of women owned small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa could be accounted for by lack of cultural socialization to be economic decision makers, male dominant culture and the belief that business world is a domain for men, hindered mobility for women by the male relatives, and dependence on male counterparts for business transactions at 95% confidence interval. R is the correlation coefficient which shows the relationship between the study variables. From the findings shown in the table above there was a strong positive relationship between the study variables as shown by 0.935.

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.742	1	0.342	1.3439	.050 ^b
	Residual	10.652	48	0.258		
	Total	11.394	49			

From the ANOVA statistics in table above, the processed data, which is the population parameters, had a significance level of 5% which shows that the data is ideal for making a conclusion on the population's parameter as the value of significance (p-value) is less than 5%. It also indicates that the model was statistically significant.

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	Constants	2.521	.612			
	Lack of cultural socialization to be economic decision makers	2.321	.523		5.860	.042
	Male dominant culture and the belief that business world is a domain for men	2.500	.083	.192	11.376	.066
	Hindered mobility for women by the male relatives	1.436	.086	.389	13.302	.052
	Dependence on male counterparts for business transactions	2.341	.249	.384	8.242	.052

An analytical model of a linear multiple regression equation of the form shown below was developed.

$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e_1$, and therefore the established regression equation was:

$Y = 2.521 + 2.321$ Lack of cultural socialization to be entrepreneurs + 2.500 male dominant culture and the belief that business world is a domain for men + 1.436 hindered mobility for women by male relatives + 2.341 dependence on male counterparts for business transactions. From the above regression equation it was revealed that holding all the four independent variables at 95% confidence interval to a constant zero, performance of women's small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa would stand at 2.521. It means that a unit increase in lack of cultural socialization to be entrepreneurs would lead to a decrease in the performance of women owned small scale businesses in Hargeisa by 2.321 factors, a unit increase in male dominant culture and the belief that business world is a domain for men would lead to a decrease in small scale business performance by 2.500 factors, a unit increase in hindered mobility for women by the male relatives would lead to a decrease in women's small scale business performance in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa of the by 1.436 factors, and a unit increase in dependence on male counterparts for business transactions would lead to a decrease in performance by 2.341 factors.

7. Conclusions

From the findings and interpretations given, the study concluded that women in Somaliland are not culturally socialized to become independent economic decision makers at the family level meaning that women trading in small scale businesses in Shiraqle market in Hargeisa are not culturally mandated to decide how to spend family

incomes including the proceeds from their own small scale businesses. They have to agree with the authoritative male in the family (e.g. husband) on how money should be spent. The study also concluded that majority of women in Hargeisa start small scale businesses for their economic security and to be able to take care of themselves and their children. The research also concluded that Somaliland's male dominant culture creates problems for female entrepreneurs in terms of limiting their mobility and business participation: Women have to depend on their male counterparts for business deals and that the Somaliland culture restricts small scale business women from travelling far and wide looking for stocks for trade.

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