

Drivers of Women Ecopreneurship: A Review of Literature

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Abstract: *Unsustainable entrepreneurship, consumption and productions patterns have contributed greatly to environmental degradation. In pursuit of sustainable development entrepreneurs need to embrace business practices that not only generate income but also do not harm the environment. Many times men and masculinity are the representation of any type of entrepreneurship. This paper sought to investigate the likelihood of women participating in entrepreneurial activities that generate income and at the same time conserve the environment. This paper was crafted through a careful literature review of journal articles. The findings reveal that women do participate in environmental concern mainly due to the fact that they worry about the effects on their families.*

Keywords: entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship, ecopreneurship, green growth, green economy, sustainability, sustainable development

1. Introduction

Natural resource management sector including fields like tourism, agriculture, mining, forestry and fishing contribute to 42% of Kenyas Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is responsible for 70% of the overall employment rate. This is according to the Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan (GESIP) 2016 – 2030. Natural disasters and unsustainable natural resource management contribute to climate change which disproportionately affects the poorest and other vulnerable groups in the society (McAdam, 2013a). The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) warns that if this trend continues the global per capita use of natural resources will increase by 70% by 1950. As a result many countries have realized the negative impact on their people and economies and are now taking up certain cause of action that will stop and reverse the impact of climate change. The sustainable development goals are a result of countries coming together to mitigate climate change by advocating for development that inflicts minimum damage to the environment and general well being of all individuals.

Environmental concern should not be viewed as a burden but as a fundamental aspect of human well being. Sustainable development goal on climate change decries the earths degradation and its devastating effects on the quality of life. It is therefore imperative that all stakeholders participate in environmental care. Further the sustainable goals on life on land and life under water testify that unless something is done to care for the environment then we are all at risk to challenges form food insecurity to contracting diseases born from a degraded environment.

1.1 Women Entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneurship can be traced back to Schumpeter (1934) who described an entrepreneur as a person who changes the status quo of existing products to create a new product that is more beneficial. Entrepreneurship has often been viewed as a gender neutral ground, with both men and women been seen as competing equally. However McAdam (2013) connotes that entrepreneurship is a gendered terrain

and men are more likely to support fellow men in a homosocial pattern confirming and further propagating discrimination in the corporate world. This is collaborated by Ahl & Marlow, (2012) who posit that the male is considered as the figure of entrepreneurship with anything outside this being considered out of the norm. As a result women face a different set of challenges in the process of entrepreneurship compared to their male counterparts. Rani and Rao (2017) as quoted by Fosić et al., (2017) define a woman entrepreneur as a woman who shows initiative, is perceptive and has an eye for opportunities, one who is willing to take risks ; not only creating opportunities for others through employment but also , in the processes generating wealth for herself using innovative skills. Muldoon et al., (2019) connotes that women are more likely to engage in social entrepreneurship as opposed to conventional entrepreneurship. This further implies that women are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship for social rather than economic benefit. De Silva & Pownall, (2012) found out that educated females are more likely to engage in ecopreneurship compared to their less educated counterparts.

1.2 Ecopreneurship

The Stokholm declaration in 1972 and the Brundlant report in 1987 are considered the foundations of the green economy and consequently , ecopreneurship also known as green economy (Uslu et al., 2015). The UNEP defines green economy as ‘one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities’. This definition by UNEP further alludes to the fact that a green economy is one that causes low carbon emission, is resource efficient and socially inclusive. Ecopreneurship is about producing green products and technologies, a practice that will contribute to green growth (Farinelli et al., 2011). Entrepreneurship differs from ecopreneurship in that an entrepreneur focus on profits only while an ecopreneur focuses not only on profits but also on environmental care. Environmental research and knowledge is one of the areas that has contributed immensely to the process of sustainable development. Among the approaches used by environmental

researcher to achieve this is the eco-economy which provides communities with potential economic development while ensuring management and reproduction of local resources.

Farinelli et al., (2011) connote that there is a difference in the way ecopreneurship is viewed in the developed countries *vis a vis* the developing countries in that; the developed world places emphasis on the word 'green' while the developing countries place emphasis on the word 'entrepreneurship'. As such based on the definition of schumpeter (1934) that an entrepreneur is someone who promotes the economic and business environment to overcome old ways of operating, there needs to be a middle ground on what entrepreneurship entails ; so that all ecopreneurship concepts of innovation and market orientation can rhyme with sustainability and ecological mindfulness (Hechavarría, 2016). Hechavarría, (2016) further posits that, though there has been growing concern and research on ecopreneurship, there has been little focus on the participation of women in the green ventures and the factors that motivate them to engage in ecopreneurship.

On gender and ecopreneurship, women are influenced to a large extent by socialization they have undergone. They are more likely to take up traditional jobs as opposed to the non traditional jobs. Ecopreneurship may be preferred by women as it represents a more feasible alternative to the non-traditional jobs(Hechavarría, 2016).

1.3 Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is based on the premise that both women and nature are interconnected by their ability to reproduce and their vulnerability to wildness which is dominant in this patriarchal world(Batrićević & Paunović, 2019). Batrićević & Paunović, (2019) further connote that women and environment are both valuable resources to the universe but their strengths are controlled and violated by men. Ecofeminism is therefore about turning back to the nature and establishing a strong bond between the women and environment in order empower women not only economically but also psychologically. Ecofeminists advocate for ethic of care and nature by challenging the domination of women and nature by men based on socially constructed experiences.

1.4 Rationale

Sustainable development goal (SDG) 12: Responsible consumption and production clearly indicates that for economic growth and sustainable development to be achieved, humanity needs to urgently reduce its carbon footprint(*Goal 12*, n.d.). Some of the targets of the goals include: efficient management of shared natural resources and responsible disposal of toxic waste and pollutants. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (Program), (2005. P2) indicated that human beings have degraded the ecosystem as they try to satisfy their needs for food, fresh water, timber, fiber, and fuel, resulting to substantially and largely irreversible loss of biodiversity, more so over the last 50 years. These sentiments are collaborated by Steffen et al., (2015) who connotes that human beings are the main drivers

of environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity and climate change. He also posits that there is an urgent need for a new paradigm that integrated both human development and environmental sustainability. The MEA report further indicated that though there has been substantial gains in economic development from the activities leading to degradation, there has also been an exacerbation of poverty levels among some groups of people (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (Program), 2005. P2). The exacerbation of poverty negates the rationale of goal no 10 which talks about 'Reducing Inequalities' and goal number 8 'Decent work and Economic growth'. In a different light, Ahl & Marlow, (2012) connote that entrepreneurship is generally associated with the men with McAdam, (2013b) collaborating this terming entrepreneurship as a gendered terrain. In light of this there is an urgent need to understand how to find the balance between production, consumption and environmental sustainability and ensuring that there is inclusivity so as to reverse the narrative of exacerbated poverty due to environmental degradation. This work seeks to bring to the attention of policy makers in government and other institutions the role of ecopreneurship in achieving sustainable development, consequently contributing to environmental friendly and gender inclusive policy. As noted by Hörisch et al., (2017) institutions are instrumental in explaining entrepreneurial behavior and more specifically, the degree of environmental orientation entrepreneurs choose for their ventures.

2. Methodology

This paper is crafted by carefully reviewing literature that links women to ecopreneurship. Galkina & Hultman, (2016; Setyawati et al., (2018) are examples of researchers in the field of ecopreneurship who have used this method. The literature comprised of journals published on data bases such as Emerald, Researchgate among others. The journals were identified through a search words including, ecopreneurship, green entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, women and entrepreneurship. The material identified was then reviewed and categorized according to thematic area coming out. The thematic areas are what the areas are as discussed below. The discussions have been crafted through careful analysis, making references and deductions from the data collected.

3. Discussions

3.1 Socialization

Borrowing from the socialization theory, Hechavarría, (2016) connotes that certain societal normative expectations propel individuals to behave in a particular way; for example, since women are expected to be caregivers it is therefore easier for them to naturally slide towards care and concern for the environment compared to their male counterparts. When evaluating the effect of a training conducted on going green and reduction of the carbon footprint, Braun, (2010) found that women now saw themselves as agents of change with broader concern of the greater good, while the men saw it as an opportunity to spend less and maximize profit. The evaluation also found that women were more proactive in networking with

likeminded green entrepreneurs. This kind of behaviour demonstrated in the research agrees with Hechavaria (2016) when she says that the mother hood mentality is extended to the environment while men are required to be aggressive and competitive as the breadwinners of the family. Due to the fact that there is reward or punishment depending on how well you adhere to the unwritten rules of socialization, women are more likely to be inclined towards roles that demonstrate sharing, cooperation and caring implying that women are more likely to pursue ecological issues and thus environmental entrepreneurs more than men (Hechavarría, 2016). Sanyang & Huang, (2008) find that green activities such as organic farming require local technology which is readily available and accessible to women allowing them to participate in ecopreneurship at lower labour costs. The study Webster et al., (2003) confirms that women are more likely to make management decisions based on the impact on children and other people. Strikingly this same study found that men were more likely to have concrete plan for environmental care and management.

Though environmental care and concern is not a preserve for the women Merchant, (1996) links women to the role of environmental caretakers with roots in the Greek culture. She posits that the word ecology comes from the Greek word 'oikos' which means household. Therefore the term ecology describes the earth as a household linking the woman to her traditional role of a care giver to the care giver of the earth a role that is understood better as women assume the roles of mothers and home makers in their adult life (Momsen, 2000).

3.2 Knowledge on environmental issues

Essentially the role of information in ecopreneurship is to equip people with knowledge that enables them to make conscious decisions about environmental protection. Momsen, (2000) connotes that most studies focusing on gender and environmental concern are conducted in the more privileged western context and they usually lay more focus on gender roles rather than on the effect of differences in education and decision-making power on environmental issues. According to ISO (14000) as quoted by Gunawan, (2012) "the most vital barriers in implementing eco-friendly business are lack of awareness, lack of knowledge/socialization and lack of guidance and support on how to implement environmental standards". In their study on the ecopreneurship of young women entrepreneur candidates at university Haris et al., (2019) found that most women entrepreneurs had the entrepreneurial ability to break process and technology but lacked the entrepreneurial character and the ability to come up with good business plans.

Momsen, (2000) posits that women are more receptive of information that links environmental conditions to potential harm to them and their children. He further connotes that because of this, women are likely to be more active in local environmental issues as compared to the general environmental issues. Gunawan, (2012) in her review of related literature found the lack of knowledge, limited knowledge and lack of willingness to share information were

major barriers to ecopreneurship. She also found that start-up ecopreneurs lacked awareness of this business environment obviously presenting challenges to them in term of how business should be run. McEwen collaborates this by positing that quality knowledge is a major barrier to ecopreneurship since technical operations cannot be efficiently and effectively accomplished. women have higher fear of failure than men, they are also likely to know less entrepreneurs than men and also have less confidence in their entrepreneurial skill making them less likely to start a business (Koellinger et al., 2013). GPNI (2014) as quoted by Phani & Potluri, (2020) connotes that effective communication and minimal information disclosure pose hurdles to the proliferation of green products, processes and services in the Indian market causing making it challenging for green entrepreneurship to proliferate the market.

3.3 Entrepreneurial Intention

Simply put, entrepreneurial orientation is the style in which an entrepreneurship is run. The process, practice and decision making activities of entrepreneurship are what have been described as entrepreneurial orientation by Lumpkin & Dess, (1996). Miller (1983) as quoted by Lumpkin & Dess, (1996) further describes the facets of entrepreneurial orientation as innovativeness, proactiveness and risktaking. Ajzen (1991) in his Theory of Planned Behaviour posits that perception, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control are the three antecedents that shape an individuals behavioural intentions. Zenger and Kolfman (2012) as quoted in Phani & Potluri, (2020) connote that women have a higher degree to take initiative and derive results from their activities. Phani & Potluri, (2020) further connote that women are more aware and keen on the consequences of their actions and those of others. As a result their combination of intuitive and logical thinking is a near perfect combination which makes them better and more respected managers. Lumpkin & Dess, (1996) posit that in an environment of freedom and autonomy characteristics of entrepreneurship are more likely to manifest. As such women are more likely to exhibit entrepreneurial orientation when there are offered degree of freedom. Yordanova & Alexandrova-Boshnakova, (2011) women have a lower risk propensity than their male counterparts. This could be attributed to the fact that women hold on to social expectation and may perceive themselves first as homemakers then entrepreneurs. In fact, Yordanova & Alexandrova-Boshnakova, (2011) connote that women worry less about risk related to economic problems and work life and more about risks relating to their families. Collaborating the fact that women are first homemakers then entrepreneurs, Mordi, C. & Okafor, C. (2010) found that women's earnings from entrepreneurship were mostly invested back into the family. They further connote that engaging in entrepreneurship is seen as a means of self-employment and a source of income for meeting the family needs.

Risk Propensity

Rodríguez-García et al., (2019) connote that 'Ecopreneurship is related to the economic concept of the common good, which refers to fostering and imparting the human values of dignity, solidarity, sustainability, social justice, democracy,

and transparency'. Meek et al., (2010) connote that Governments influence environmental entrepreneurship through regulatory pressure. Governments may also provide environmental friendly services such as creating a conducive environment for environmental entrepreneurs to practice and network with other like minded individuals. Chipu (2016) In his study on factors influencing green entrepreneurship in south Africa found that there were policies by the South African government and other institutions in south Africa. However the green entrepreneurs were not enthusiastic on partaking the policy benefits pushing the researcher to wonder the level of awareness of the existence of the policy. This is indicative that even though there could policies put in place to assist green entrepreneurs there is minimal awareness on how to access them. In addition to institutional support non formal support is key to engaging in green entrepreneurship. Shinnar et al., (2012) found that fear of failure and lack of confidence in entrepreneurial skill was a key determinant in entrepreneurial behaviour. The family support model of entrepreneurship posits that people are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship if they feel that they will receive financial and social support from their family members. Since women are nurturers, they are more preoccupied by the well being of others and are therefore likely to take risks less. This could imply that they are also more likely to engage in ecopreneurship so that the care for not only their families but also the environment (Yordanova & Alexandrova-Boshnakova, 2011; Phani & Potluri, 2020).

4. Conclusions

All over the world gender roles are changing with women shifting. Women now contribute to family finances and decision making within the home, activities which were traditionally reserved for the men. As indicated earlier in this paper, every individual must participate in environmental conservation so as to reverse the effects of climate change. there is no doubt that enterprises contribute a great deal the carbon foot-print (Braun, 2010; De Silva & Pownall, 2012; Hechavarría, 2016; Webster et al., 2003) and immediate action must be taken. it is therefore imperative that we understand the role women in achieving this end even as we embrace the shift from women being only home makes but co-providers and even breadwinners of the family. Studies that have been conducted on differences on gender and environmental concern have often been inconclusive (Momsen, 2000). This literature review has revealed that women's participation in ecopreneurship is influenced by various factors include: socialization, knowledge and education, entrepreneurial orientation and risk propensity. The findings of this study clarify the motivations of women to engage in green entrepreneurship and may also be used by governments, policy makers and educators.

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