

# FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELF-RELIANCE AS PANACEA TO COMBATING UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED ENTREPRENEURS IN ONDO STATE

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## Introduction

Unemployment in Nigeria has long been a critical socio-economic challenge, affecting not only the country's economic stability but also its social fabric. As the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria's labor force is vast, with millions of people entering the job market annually. However, the economy has struggled to absorb this growing labor force, resulting in high and persistent levels of unemployment.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria's unemployment rate reached an alarming 33.3% in the fourth quarter of 2020, while the youth unemployment rate surged to 42.5% (NBS, 2021). This means that nearly one-third of the active labor force is either unemployed or underemployed. The situation is even more dire for youths and women, who face structural barriers to employment, leading to disproportionately high unemployment rates among these groups.

Nigeria, notably the most populous nation on the continent, sometimes auspiciously referred to as "giant of Africa" with over 211 million people, is grappling with an alarming unemployment crisis, noticeably among its womenfolk. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), the unemployment rate for women stands at a daunting 35%, a stark contrast to the 29% for men. This gender disparity mirrors broader trends in developing nations, where women's participation in the labor force often lags their male counterparts (World Bank, 2021).

However, in the heart of this crisis, women entrepreneurs have emerged as a beacon of hope. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) underscores that female entrepreneurship has the potential to ignite job creation and fuel economic progress. In Nigeria, both federal initiatives and international bodies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020) have

recognized the pivotal role of supporting women-owned enterprises in fortifying economic resilience and empowerment.

Furthermore, recent research by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2021) reveals a burgeoning wave of Nigerian women who, driven by the quest for financial autonomy and societal impact, are venturing into businesses. By nurturing a supportive environment for these entrepreneurs, through accessible finance, education, and mentorship, Nigeria stands to harness the untapped potential of its female workforce (African Development Bank, 2021).

In Ondo State, the promotion of women entrepreneurship can be a strategic antidote to unemployment as proven by some few and far between cases. Enhancing women's entrepreneurial skills not only boosts their economic standing but also stimulates local economic development. This paper argues that empowering women through entrepreneurship and self-reliance is not just a remedy for unemployment but a necessary strategy for economic revitalization in regions like Ondo State, where economic hardships are keenly felt.

The importance of women entrepreneurship cannot be overstated. Women entrepreneurs contribute to economic growth, job creation, poverty reduction, gender equality, and social inclusion. Their ability to innovate, invest in their communities, and promote sustainable development makes them crucial players in achieving long-term economic and social progress Brush et al. (2021). In country like Nigeria, where unemployment and poverty are rampant, empowering women through entrepreneurship offers a viable solution for fostering inclusive growth and creating resilient economies.

### Statement of the Problem

Unemployment is a critical issue in Nigeria, especially affecting women and youth, with the unemployment rate reaching 33.3% in late 2020. Despite government efforts, the formal sector has been unable to absorb the growing labor force, leaving many, particularly women, without jobs. Women face additional challenges due to gender inequality, limited education, financial barriers, and cultural restrictions, which are especially pronounced in rural areas like Ondo State.

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a potential solution for women's unemployment, offering a path to self-reliance and economic empowerment. However, challenges such as lack of access to finance, training, mentorship, and infrastructure hinder their success. This study aims to explore how women entrepreneurship in Ondo State can combat unemployment, foster economic growth, reduce poverty, and promote social inclusion. It will provide insights into the role of women entrepreneurs and propose recommendations for supporting sustainable women-led businesses in Nigeria.

### Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to explore how women entrepreneurship in Ondo State can combat unemployment, foster economic growth, reduce poverty, and promote social inclusion. The specific objectives are to:

- to identify and analyze the main barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Ondo State that hinder their business success, including financial, social, and regulatory challenges;

- to assess the impact of women entrepreneurship on job creation and economic growth in Ondo State, including an analysis of the sectors where women are most active;
- to examine the role of self-reliance in enhancing the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Ondo State, exploring how independence from traditional employment influences their business strategies and outcomes;
- to evaluate the effectiveness of various support systems, including financial assistance, educational programs, and mentorship initiatives, in promoting the success of women-owned businesses in Ondo State and;
- to investigate how socio-cultural factors influence the participation of women in entrepreneurial activities in Ondo State, focusing on norms, expectations, and community support that shape their entrepreneurial journeys.

### Research Questions

To guide the conduct of this study, the following research questions were raised:

- What are the main barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Ondo State that hinder their business success?
- How does women entrepreneurship contribute to job creation and economic growth in Ondo State?
- What role does self-reliance play in enhancing the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in the region?
- What support systems (financial, educational, mentorship) are most effective in promoting the success of women-owned businesses in Ondo State?
- How do socio-cultural factors influence the participation of women in entrepreneurial activities in Ondo State?

### Research Hypotheses

In line with the objectives and research questions of the study, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- **H01:** Women entrepreneurs in Ondo State face significant financial, social, and regulatory barriers that hinder their business success.
- **H02:** Women entrepreneurship has a significant positive impact on job creation and economic growth in Ondo State.
- **H03:** Self-reliance significantly enhances the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Ondo State.
- **H04:** Effective support systems, such as financial assistance, educational programs, and mentorship initiatives, significantly promote the success of women-owned businesses in Ondo State.
- **H05:** Socio-cultural factors significantly influence the participation of women in entrepreneurial activities in Ondo State.

### Conceptualization of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined as follows:

**Women Entrepreneurship:** This refers to the process of women initiating, managing, and operating their own businesses. This concept encompasses various aspects, including the motivations, challenges, and success factors that women face in the entrepreneurial landscape. Women entrepreneurs often engage in

diverse sectors, from small-scale enterprises to larger businesses, and their contributions are crucial for economic growth and job creation.

**Self-Reliance:** This term signifies the ability of individuals or groups to depend on their own capabilities and resources to meet their economic needs. In the context of women entrepreneurship, self-reliance emphasizes the independence gained through owning and operating a business, allowing women to achieve financial stability and autonomy, ultimately reducing reliance on traditional employment or external support.

**Unemployment:** Unemployment refers to the state of being without a job while actively seeking work. It is typically measured as a percentage of the labor force that is unemployed. In Nigeria, unemployment rates are particularly high among women and youths, reflecting systemic barriers and economic challenges. Understanding the nuances of unemployment is critical for addressing the root causes and developing effective solutions.

**Economic Empowerment:** Economic empowerment involves increasing the economic strength and independence of individuals, particularly marginalized groups such as women. This includes access to financial resources, employment opportunities, education, and skills training. In the context of women entrepreneurship, economic empowerment is achieved when women can generate income, make financial decisions, and influence economic outcomes within their households and communities.

**Socio-Cultural Factors:** These are the societal and cultural influences that shape individuals' behaviors, beliefs, and opportunities. In the context of women entrepreneurship, socio-cultural factors can include gender norms, family expectations, cultural attitudes toward women in business, and access to networks. Understanding these factors is essential for recognizing the challenges women face in starting and sustaining their enterprises.

**Job Creation:** Job creation refers to the process of generating new employment opportunities within an economy. This can occur through the establishment of new businesses, expansion of existing enterprises, or public sector initiatives. In the context of women entrepreneurship, job creation is a significant outcome, as women-owned businesses often hire other individuals, contributing to overall employment levels in the community.

**Support Systems:** This term encompasses the various resources and networks available to entrepreneurs that facilitate their business success. Support systems can include financial assistance (such as loans and grants), educational programs, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Effective support systems are crucial for helping women entrepreneurs overcome barriers and thrive in their business endeavors.

## Literature Review

### Women Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurship refers to the process of women initiating, developing, and managing their own businesses. It encompasses a range of activities, from identifying business opportunities to implementing strategies for growth and sustainability. Women entrepreneurs can be found across various sectors, including agriculture, retail, technology, and services, and they play a vital role in economic development and job creation.

According to Brush et al. (2019), women entrepreneurship is characterized not only by the ownership of businesses but also by the unique challenges and opportunities women face in the entrepreneurial landscape. These can include access to finance, social and cultural barriers, and differences in business strategies compared to their male counterparts. Women's entrepreneurial activities often focus on community development and social impact, as many women prioritize businesses that address local needs (GEM, 2020).

In many developing countries, including Nigeria, women entrepreneurship is viewed as a key driver for economic empowerment and poverty alleviation. By fostering self-reliance and economic independence, women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to their families and communities, creating a ripple effect that enhances overall economic growth (World Bank, 2022).

### The Role of Women in Economic Development

Women play a crucial role in economic development, significantly influencing growth, innovation, and social progress. As entrepreneurs, women contribute to job creation, income generation, and poverty reduction, which are essential for sustainable economic development. In the context of Nigeria, where unemployment rates are high, empowering women through entrepreneurship can be a powerful strategy to combat economic challenges.

Women entrepreneurs often address unmet needs in their communities, creating businesses that not only generate profits but also enhance social well-being. By engaging in various sectors such as agriculture, retail, and services, women help diversify the economy and improve resilience against economic shocks (World Bank, 2022). Moreover, women tend to reinvest their earnings into their families and communities, fostering improved health, education, and social stability (GEM, 2020).

In Ondo State, as in other regions, supporting women entrepreneurship can lead to significant economic transformation. It not only provides women with the opportunity for self-reliance but also contributes to reducing overall unemployment. By recognizing and enhancing the role of women in economic development, Nigeria can leverage their potential to create a more inclusive and prosperous economy.

### Self-Reliance and Its Significance

Self-reliance refers to the ability of individuals to independently manage their resources and make decisions to meet their economic needs. In the context of women entrepreneurship, self-reliance is crucial for empowering women to take charge of their financial futures and contribute meaningfully to their communities. By establishing and running their own businesses, women gain not only economic independence but also confidence and leadership skills.

The significance of self-reliance among women entrepreneurs in Nigeria cannot be overstated. It serves as a pathway to overcoming the barriers imposed by systemic gender inequalities and socio-cultural norms that often restrict women's participation in the labor market (World Bank, 2022). When women achieve self-reliance through entrepreneurship, they can reinvest their earnings into their families, leading to improved health, education, and overall well-being for their communities (GEM, 2020).

Moreover, self-reliance fosters resilience, allowing women to adapt to economic changes and uncertainties. By empowering women to create their own economic opportunities, self-reliance contributes to broader economic growth and job creation, making it a vital component of strategies to combat unemployment in Nigeria (Adepoju et al., 2022).

### **Barrier faced by Women Entrepreneurs**

In tandem with the first objective of this study, there are barriers facing women entrepreneurs which can be categorized into financial, social, and regulatory challenges, each significantly impacting women's ability to thrive in the entrepreneurial landscape.

Financial challenges are among the most pressing issues for women entrepreneurs. Access to capital is often limited due to systemic biases in lending practices and insufficient collateral (World Bank, 2022). Women frequently encounter difficulties in obtaining loans and financial support, which restricts their ability to start or expand their businesses.

Social challenges include cultural norms and gender stereotypes that discourage women from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. In many cases, women face societal expectations to prioritize family and domestic responsibilities over professional ambitions, which can limit their opportunities and networks (GEM, 2020). This social pressure often results in reduced confidence and support for women seeking to engage in business.

Regulatory challenges further complicate the entrepreneurial landscape for women. Women entrepreneurs may struggle with navigating complex business regulations, obtaining necessary permits, and complying with legal requirements, which can be overwhelming without adequate guidance and support.

### **Women Entrepreneurship on Job Creation and Economic Growth**

Women entrepreneurship in Ondo State significantly contributes to job creation and economic growth. As women engage in small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), they create employment opportunities, particularly in sectors like agriculture, retail, and fashion, where their participation is most prominent (Adebayo & Okon, 2020). By employing other women and marginalized groups, they help reduce unemployment and stimulate economic activities at the local level. Research suggests that women entrepreneurs enhance productivity by diversifying the state's economic structure, contributing to a broader economic base (Olanipekun & Obafemi, 2021). The entrepreneurial activities of these women foster innovation, financial inclusion, and community development, driving economic growth in the state.

### **Self-Reliance in Enhancing Economic Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs**

Self-reliance plays a pivotal role in enhancing the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs by allowing them to move beyond traditional employment and embrace independence in their business strategies. In Ondo State, where access to formal employment opportunities can be limited for women, entrepreneurship serves as a critical avenue for economic advancement. Self-reliant women entrepreneurs often cultivate resilience, adaptability, and innovation, leveraging these traits to overcome challenges posed by gender biases, limited access to capital, and socio-economic constraints (Onyema & Nwafor, 2021).

By shifting from dependence on traditional employment to self-reliance, women in Ondo State gain the freedom to design their business models, make strategic decisions, and explore new markets. This autonomy fosters creativity and risk-taking, essential for sustainable business growth (Afolabi & Adeoye, 2020). Women entrepreneurs, through self-reliance, have also been shown to contribute significantly to household incomes and local economies, thereby fostering broader socio-economic development (Adeola & Oladipo, 2019).

Self-reliance, in this context, serves as a catalyst for economic empowerment, enabling women to create job opportunities, build financial stability, and invest in community development. As they navigate their entrepreneurial journeys, women in Ondo State redefine success beyond conventional employment, prioritizing flexibility, personal development, and community impact in their strategies (Olaniyi, 2022).

### **Support Systems for Women-Owned Businesses**

The effectiveness of support systems such as financial assistance, educational programs, and mentorship initiatives plays a crucial role in promoting the success of women-owned businesses in Ondo State. Financial assistance, often in the form of microloans and grants, helps women overcome barriers to capital, enabling business expansion (Adeyemi & Adebisi, 2019). Educational programs focused on entrepreneurship development equip women with vital skills such as financial literacy, marketing, and technology use, increasing their capacity for growth (Ogundele & Falola, 2020). Mentorship initiatives provide access to experienced business leaders, offering guidance and networking opportunities. Collectively, these support mechanisms enhance the resilience and sustainability of women-owned businesses in the state, though challenges in access to some of these resources remain (Akinbami & Obiora, 2021).

### **Socio-Cultural Factors on Women's Participation in Entrepreneurship**

Socio-cultural factors significantly influence women's participation in entrepreneurial activities in Ondo State. Norms, community expectations, and traditional roles often shape women's access to business opportunities and resources (Afolabi, 2021). Cultural expectations around family responsibilities sometimes limit women's ability to fully engage in entrepreneurship, as they are often expected to prioritize caregiving roles (Onah & Kalu, 2019). However, community support, especially in more progressive regions, can facilitate women's entrepreneurial ventures, offering networks and informal mentorship opportunities. As gender roles evolve, women are increasingly gaining the confidence and societal backing needed to pursue entrepreneurship, although persistent cultural barriers still affect the scope of their participation (Ayodele & Ogunkoya, 2020).

### **Relationship Between Women Entrepreneurship and Self-Reliance**

A virile means of breaking away from stereotypes and limiting societal norms is to embody the principles and practice of self-reliance. This is a sure method of gaining first mental emancipation, which in turn could spiral into financial freedom.

Women entrepreneurship fosters self-reliance by empowering women to become economically independent and resilient. According to Mba (2017), self-reliance among women entrepreneurs is achieved through the establishment of successful

businesses that provide them with financial stability and personal empowerment. In Ondo State, this self-reliance is reflected in the increasing number of women who have transitioned from traditional roles to become key economic players in their communities (Afolabi & Olawale, 2019).

Investigation by Adejumo and Adesanya (2019) reveals that self-reliance is closely linked to the growth of women-owned businesses, which often leads to improved social status and economic independence for women. This empowerment is critical in Ondo State, where traditional gender roles have historically limited women's economic opportunities (Oseni & Oluwaseun, 2020). Women entrepreneurs who achieve self-reliance also contribute, in no small measures, to the broader economic stability of their communities by creating job opportunities and supporting local economic activities (Adebayo & Akintoye, 2021).

It should be noted that, the relationship between women entrepreneurship and self-reliance is supported by access to training and financial resources, which enable women to start and sustain their businesses. As highlighted by Oladele (2020), programs that provide women with skills training and financial literacy play a crucial role in enhancing their self-reliance and entrepreneurial success. In Ondo State, various local and international organizations offer support to women entrepreneurs, thereby strengthening their ability to achieve economic independence (Ibrahim & Salawu, 2022).

This phenomenon is also reinforced by the positive social impacts of women-led businesses. According to Adesina and Ige (2021), women entrepreneurs who achieve self-reliance often become role models in their communities, inspiring other women and contributing to a culture of self-employment and economic independence. This ripple effect enhances the overall economic development of Ondo State by promoting a self-reliant entrepreneurial culture among women.

## Theoretical Review

### Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, advanced by Barney (1991), asserts that an organization or individual can achieve sustained competitive advantage by strategically leveraging valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources. These resources are not limited to financial assets but also include intangible assets like knowledge, skills, relationships, and capabilities. In the context of women entrepreneurship, RBV is particularly relevant as it highlights the often-overlooked strengths that women entrepreneurs in rural and emerging markets, such as Ondo State, Nigeria, bring to their businesses.

Women entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas, often face systemic barriers to accessing formal capital and institutional support. However, under the RBV framework, the emphasis shifts to the unique internal resources women possess, which, when harnessed effectively, can lead to sustainable competitive advantages. These resources include social capital, which is built through strong community networks and relationships; creativity and innovation, where women develop context-specific solutions to local problems; and resilience, which is honed by navigating the challenges of operating in male-dominated economies (Akanbi & Ogunyemi, 2020).

In Ondo State, women entrepreneurs often draw on informal knowledge, cultural intelligence, and community-driven

collaboration, creating businesses that meet local needs. Their ability to mobilize community resources and leverage interpersonal networks allows them to thrive despite limited access to formal financial structures (Adeola & Ibidapo, 2021). For instance, women's reliance on group-based lending models or rotating savings schemes, coupled with their knowledge of local markets and cultural preferences, enables them to create value in sectors like agriculture, retail, and handicrafts, which are central to the local economy.

Through the RBV lens, women's entrepreneurship in rural settings like Ondo State is not just about surviving in a resource-constrained environment but about optimizing the unique capabilities they possess. These resources help women entrepreneurs contribute to self-reliance, job creation, and economic empowerment, especially where government jobs are limited. By leveraging their resource base effectively, women not only create sustainable enterprises but also play a significant role in economic development and social transformation, as they provide employment and improve the economic fabric of their communities (Aladejebi, 2022).

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain comprehensive insights into women entrepreneurship and self-reliance as solutions to unemployment in Ondo State. A survey is conducted to quantify challenges, contributions, and support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs, while interviews provide in-depth qualitative data on personal experiences and societal factors.

The population includes women entrepreneurs in Ondo State, with businesses spanning various sectors. Stratified random sampling is employed to select a sample of 200 women entrepreneurs, ensuring representation across different industries such as retail, agriculture, and services. A subset of 20 entrepreneurs is purposively selected for in-depth interviews to explore qualitative dimensions of their entrepreneurial experiences.

A structured questionnaire is administered to collect quantitative data on the barriers faced, impact on job creation, and effectiveness of support systems. The questionnaire includes Likert scale questions and demographic information. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 selected women entrepreneurs to gain deeper insights into socio-cultural barriers, self-reliance, and their personal experiences in business development.

Data for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as percentages, means and standard deviation for the demographic characteristics, regression analysis employed to test the impact of women entrepreneurship on job creation and economic growth, Chi-square test was made used of, to examine the relationship between access to finance and business size. ANOVA was conducted to compare economic empowerment levels across different sectors. Thematic analysis was applied to the interview data to identify recurring themes related to socio-cultural influences, financial barriers, and the role of self-reliance in entrepreneurial success.

## Results

The majority of women entrepreneurs (65%) were aged between 30 and 45 years, and 40% had secondary-level education,



with 30% holding diplomas or degrees. Their businesses spanned the retail (35%), agriculture (25%), and services (20%) sectors.

Financial barriers were identified as the most significant challenge, with 75% of respondents citing difficulty in obtaining loans.

The Chi-square test showed a significant relationship between business size and access to finance ( $\chi^2 = 15.23$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), with smaller businesses finding it harder to access funding.

Qualitative interviews revealed that socio-cultural barriers like gender roles and lack of family support also hindered entrepreneurial activities.

Women entrepreneurs reported that their businesses created jobs for 3 to 7 individuals, depending on the size of the business.

The outcome of the Regression analysis indicated a positive and significant relationship between women entrepreneurship and job creation ( $\beta = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

ANOVA results showed that women in the retail sector experienced higher levels of economic empowerment compared to other sectors ( $F = 4.89$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Self-reliance was found to significantly enhance economic empowerment, with 80% of respondents reporting that entrepreneurship had made them financially independent.

Qualitative data highlighted that self-reliance enabled women to make strategic business decisions, leading to sustainable growth and increased community investment.

Financial assistance and mentorship programs were reported as crucial by 70% of respondents.

Regression analysis indicated that access to support systems had a positive effect on business success ( $\beta = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Interview findings revealed that socio-cultural expectations, such as prioritizing domestic roles, significantly influenced women's entrepreneurial participation. However, community support was a significant enabler for those with access to progressive social networks.

## Discussion of Findings

The study reveals the women entrepreneurs in Ondo State face numerous barriers, particularly related to access to finance and societal expectations. Despite these challenges, women entrepreneurship significantly contributes to job creation and economic growth, supporting the hypothesis that empowering women entrepreneurs can combat unemployment in the region.

Self-reliance emerges as a key factor in enhancing the economic empowerment of women, as it fosters independence and resilience in business decision-making. Additionally, effective support systems, such as financial aid and mentorship, play a pivotal role in the success of women-owned businesses.

The results underscore the importance of addressing socio-cultural factors that limit women's participation in entrepreneurship, particularly in traditional communities. Providing women with access to training, finance, and supportive networks will be crucial in overcoming these barriers and fostering a culture of self-reliance and economic independence.

The study's findings provide a strong basis for policy recommendations aimed at improving the entrepreneurial landscape for women in Nigeria, particularly through the provision of financial and educational support tailored to their unique needs.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the critical role of women entrepreneurship in addressing the pervasive issue of unemployment in Ondo State, Nigeria. By examining the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, their contributions to job creation and economic growth, the significance of self-reliance, and the impact of support systems, this research offers valuable insights into the potential of women-led businesses to revitalize the region's economy.

Key findings from the study include:

- Women entrepreneurs in Ondo State face significant barriers, including financial constraints, social and cultural challenges, and regulatory hurdles.
- Women entrepreneurship has a positive impact on job creation and economic growth, contributing to diversification, innovation, and poverty reduction.
- Self-reliance is essential for empowering women entrepreneurs, enabling them to overcome challenges, achieve financial independence, and contribute to community development.
- Effective support systems, such as financial assistance, educational programs, and mentorship, are crucial for promoting the success of women-owned businesses.
- Socio-cultural factors influence women's participation in entrepreneurship, with both positive and negative impacts.

Based on these findings, it is evident that empowering women through entrepreneurship is a strategic approach to addressing unemployment in Ondo State. By providing women with the necessary support and resources, the state can harness the potential of its female workforce to create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and promote social inclusion.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to address unemployment in Ondo State through the promotion of women entrepreneurship:

### Policy Recommendations

- Create a supportive policy environment: Implement policies that facilitate business registration, reduce regulatory burdens, and protect the rights of women entrepreneurs.
- Expand access to finance: Increase access to loans, grants, and other financial instruments for women entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas.
- Invest in education and training: Provide women with entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, and technical skills to enhance their business capabilities.
- Promote gender equality and social inclusion: Address harmful gender stereotypes and cultural norms that hinder women's participation in entrepreneurship.

- Strengthen mentorship and networking opportunities: Connect women entrepreneurs with experienced mentors and industry professionals to provide guidance and support.
- Prioritize women-owned businesses in government procurement: Increase opportunities for women-owned businesses to participate in government contracts.

#### **Stakeholder Recommendations**

- Private sector: Invest in women-owned businesses through partnerships, collaborations, and supply chain relationships.
- NGOs and civil society organizations: Provide training, mentorship, and networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs.
- Academic institutions: Conduct research and develop curriculum on women entrepreneurship to promote knowledge and capacity building.
- Community leaders: Promote a culture of entrepreneurship and support women's economic empowerment.

#### **Individual Recommendations**

- Women entrepreneurs: Build strong networks, leverage their unique strengths, and seek mentorship to overcome challenges.
- Mentors: Share their knowledge and experience to support the growth of women entrepreneurs.
- Consumers: Support women-owned businesses by purchasing their products and services.

By implementing these recommendations, Ondo State can create a more inclusive and prosperous economy where women entrepreneurs play a central role in addressing unemployment and driving sustainable development.

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