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Entrepreneurial Strategies and Growth of Women Micro-Enterprises in Kenya: A Case of Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub County

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Entrepreneurial Strategies and Growth of Women Micro-Enterprises in Kenya: A Case of Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub County

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Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of this study was to examine entrepreneurial strategies and growth of women micro-enterprises in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub County. The study sought to establish the influence that innovation, networking, entrepreneurial training, and entrepreneurial finance have on the growth of women micro-enterprises in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub County.

Methodology: The target population was three hundred and seventy-two registered enterprises in Ongata Rongai. Sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used. Hence, the sample size was one hundred and eighty-nine respondents. Questionnaires were the key data collection instrument. The collected data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Descriptive analysis and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive data were summarized into frequencies and percentages with the help of the SPSS and presented using tables, figures, and pie charts. On the other hand, inferential analysis helped in establishing the statistical relationship between entrepreneurial strategies and growth of Women-led enterprises. Multiple Regression model was used to present the inferential analysis.

Findings: The study found that eighty-one-point seven percent variations on the growth of women-led enterprises are explained by innovation, networking, entrepreneurial training, and entrepreneurial finance. There is a positive association and significant relationship between Innovation, Networking, Entrepreneurial Training and Entrepreneurial Finance.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The study recommended that there is a need for opportunities to be created that can help women entrepreneurs to network with other individuals from various professions on a regular basis. Women entrepreneurs should also seek more training in entrepreneurship skills. There is also need for mentorship and incubation programs aimed at

promoting the growth of women enterprises. Financial institutions should also target women entrepreneurs through easy access to financial support. There is a need for a similar study to be carried out to establish the challenge facing the attainment of entrepreneurial skills among women entrepreneurs in rural or remote areas of Kenya.

Key words: *Entrepreneurial Strategies, Women Owned Micro-Enterprises, Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub County*

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in businesses has been characterized by a number of issues such as family support. As such, due to the changing environment, women are now being more engaged in a business startup as compared to some years ago. Globally, businesses owned by women accounted for twenty-five to thirty-three percent of all businesses (Marcucci, 2001). However, this percentage is slightly higher in the African countries whereby it ranges between forty and fifty percent and it can go up to sixty percent in some countries. Entrepreneurship strategy can be rephrased as strategic entrepreneurship. It is a combination of entrepreneurship and strategic management. According to Siba (2019), it is a new competitive landscape which was developed in the 90s. It is considered a dominant influence in the success of firms in the 21st Century. The characteristics of entrepreneurship strategy create an environment in which entrepreneurs are able to capture existing markets in some instances while creating new ones in others, take market share from less aggressive and innovative competitors, and take the customers, assets, and even the employees of said existing firms (Khan, Li, Safdar & Khan, 2019).

According to various researchers such as Khan, Li, Safdar and Khan (2019) and Paek and Lee (2018) entrepreneurial strategies are gaining more relevance to both the new and established businesses. This is because their link to firm success is receiving additional validation. Entrepreneurial strategies are the embodiment of entrepreneurial revolution which is taking place all over the globe including some countries which have been considered as emerging economies (Leitch, Welter & Henry, 2018).

In the African perspective, entrepreneurial strategies have been adopted by various individuals in small and medium enterprises. According to Bengesi and Le Roux (2014), strategic entrepreneurial response of SMEs in developing economies such as Tanzania is very important. This is because there is a positive relationship which exists between entrepreneurial strategies such as market orientation (MO), entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and network capabilities (NWC) and the performance of SMEs.

In Ghana, Obeng, Robson, and Haug (2012) observe that strategic entrepreneurship influences the growth of small firms. They point out that the growth of the firms is associated with the characteristics of the entrepreneur, firm resources and firm strategy. In South Africa, entrepreneurial strategies have been observed to have a role in influencing the performance of small and medium enterprises. Mohutsiwa (2012) explained that SMEs need to be proactive, take

risks and be innovative so as to influence their own performance. Various entrepreneurial strategies have also been reviewed in the Kenyan context. For instance, Gathenya (2015) pointed out that various aspects of entrepreneurial strategic planning (entrepreneurial orientation, scanning intensity, planning flexibility, planning horizon and locus of planning) had a positive influence on the performance of SMEs across different industries (Agro-based Industry, service, and trade industry) in Kenya.

According to the European Union (2011), businesses are classified based on the number of employees. However, also taken into account in the classification are the turnover rates and the balance sheets of the business. A micro-enterprise is a business with a headcount of 10 employees or less. On the other hand, small and medium-sized enterprises have a headcount of 50 employees or fewer. Berends et al. (2014) observed that small firms are not the smaller versions of larger firms. This is because they are characterized by particular strengths and limitations in innovations of products. Moreover, these small enterprises do not have bureaucracy and are often managed by an owner/director who is able to take key decisions quickly, enjoy efficient and informal internal communication patterns and develop strong relationships with customers.

Statement of the Problem

Micro enterprises have an important role in the development of Kenya's economy. As such, the dream of the government in creating 500,000 jobs annually can only be made possible through the micro enterprises. Therefore, it is evident that with proper development strategies, the sector is capable of providing and surpassing the government's target of creating 500,000 jobs annually. Entrepreneurial strategies have a potential of improving the economy through diversity of market creation and development of new products and employment. Entrepreneurs who apply these strategies are considered to have success in the growth of their business (Khan, Li, Safdar & Khan, 2019; Paek & Lee, 2018).

Despite, the significance of micro-enterprises in the overall economy and job creation, past statistics have been able to show that out of five businesses, only two get to grow whereas the rest fail within the first few months of its operations (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). This, therefore, seems to show that the entrepreneurs do not apply entrepreneurial strategies. Within Ongata Rongai, there are more enterprises operated by men as compared to women. Moreover, some of the businesses which were being operated by the women have ended up being closed and others merging with other businesses to form partnerships. As such, this raised concern within the researcher to examine the issues contributing to the above situations and with specific interest to whether the women had any entrepreneurial strategies and skills relevant to operating the businesses.

Literature has been able to show that the enterprises which are led by women are vulnerable (Jaiyeba, 2010). This is attributed to issues such as finances, management issues, information and technology, access to market among many others. In addition, the women-owned enterprises are found in informal, micro and low-profit areas where there is intense competition. As such, the

incidence of growth is very low (Siba, 2019). For the women entrepreneurs such as areas to grow, they need to make strategic moves. Hence, this study sought to examine whether the women entrepreneurs had entrepreneurial strategies in place and the influence that these strategies had on the growth of their business.

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the influence of innovation on the growth of women enterprises in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub County.
- ii. To establish how networking affects the growth of women enterprises in Ongata Rongai, Kajiado North Sub County.

Conceptual Framework

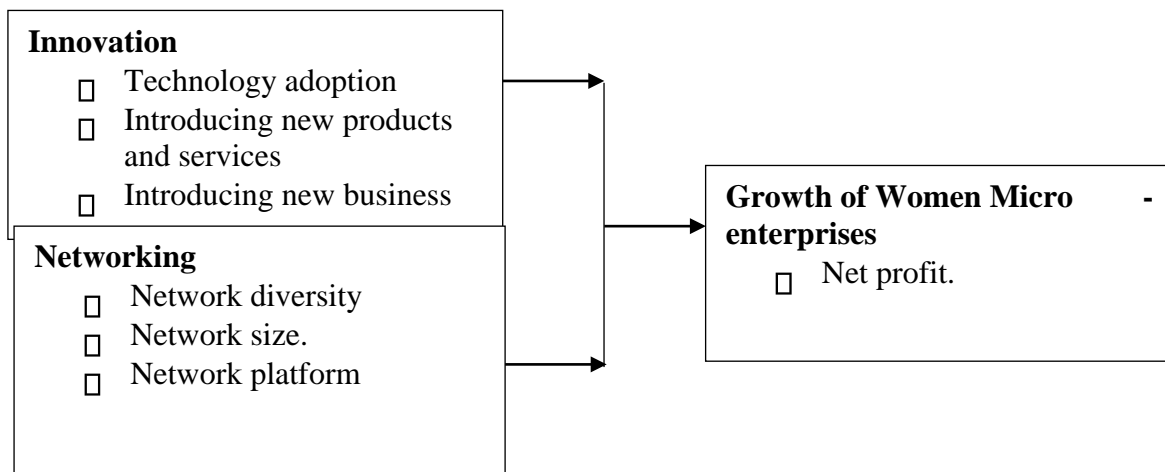


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK Diffusion of Innovative Theory of Entrepreneurship

‘Diffusion’ is a concept that was first introduced by a French sociologist Gabriel Tarde in late 19th century. Later it was elucidated by German and Austrian anthropologists Friedrich Ratzel and Leo Frobenius. The first-time diffusion of innovation was studied in a rural sociology. Diffusion of innovation has then been applied in numerous contexts including entrepreneurship.

The Diffusion of Innovations has been studied by many scholars, including Dr. Everett M. Rogers. Dr. Rogers was trying to enable farmers adopt innovation to become productive. Rogers noted that it is not always the best technologies that get adopted but it is often the most convenient. A core assumption of the theory is that innovations do not automatically spread to large segments of a population. The diffusion of innovations is a stochastic process involving random probabilities but

it also can be influenced by strategies that change the odds. In order to cause an innovation to diffuse, an entrepreneur needs to help the innovation to surmount most of these barriers. Rogers argued that diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated over time from an entrepreneur to the current and potential customers. Rogers proposed that there are four elements that spread a new idea: innovation itself, communication channels, time and social systems. This process relies heavily on human capital.

Sociology Theory of Entrepreneurship

There are various proponents of the sociological theory of entrepreneurship. These proponents include Frank W. Young, Hoseltiz, Max Weber, Cochran and Stocke. Each of these proponents had their own contributions to the sociological theory of entrepreneurship. For instance, Cochran (1977) indicated that cultural values, role expectation and social acceptance played a prominent role in entrepreneurship development and entrepreneur is a model of personality. Weber (1990) indicated that community and religion influence entrepreneurs in that they applied the conventions and values of that community or religion. Hoselitz (1953) argued that the development of industrial entrepreneur is based on only which type of society are there.

According the theory, entrepreneurship can be explained based on the social context which creates opportunities for entrepreneurs. According to Reynolds (1991), there are four key social aspects which may influence entrepreneurial opportunities. These include social networks, ethnic identification, and social-political environment factors. It can also be noted that the entrepreneurship can also be explained from a cultural perspective. This is in the sense that cultural forces such as social attitudes dictate the ways in which an entrepreneur may think and behave (Dontigney, 2018).

Empirical Review

Njogu (2014) examined the influence of innovation on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi County. The researcher used stratified random sampling, to obtain a sample size of 180 registered manufacturing small and medium enterprises within Nairobi County. Questionnaires were used for collecting data which were analyzed using descriptive and regression statistical tools and presented using tables. The study established that there is a significant relationship between product/service innovation, process innovation, and market innovation and financial performance of manufacturing SMEs in Nairobi County. The study found out that manufacturing small medium enterprises have introduced more innovative products and services, have developed and implemented new business methods and services which have improved productions and delivery of services and that innovative marketing and promotion campaigns to find new markets have had significant implication on financial performance of SMEs.

Oirere (2015) examined the effect of innovation on the financial performance of small and medium manufacturing enterprises in Nairobi County. The population of the study was the registered manufacturing SMEs in Nairobi County. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. The data collected relate to the level of innovation adapted, effects of innovation on financial

performance and the challenges faced during implementation. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 where inferential statistics were applied and multiple regressions employed to test the relationship between innovation and the financial performance of manufacturing SMEs in Nairobi County. It was revealed that combination of the use of computers, implementation of online sales through the internet, training, and development of employees, level of expertise employed, adoption of technology, the introduction of new branches/business and introduction of new products/services contributed to 73% of financial performance. The study concluded that innovation has a positive effect on financial performance.

Maina et al., (2016) did a study in Kenya main objective was to investigate the influence of network relationships on the performance of Kenyan Small and Medium Enterprises. Specifically, the variables analyzed included the effect of platforms, contents, and governance. It is evident from the study that network platforms positively and significantly influence firm performance.

Surin and Wahab (2013) investigated the impact of social network on business performance in the Malaysian established manufacturing SMEs. The research data were collected through mail questionnaire sent to owner-manager in manufacturing industry around Malaysia. Stratified random sampling was used which elicited 226 useable responses to be used for data analysis. The outcomes of hierarchical multiple regression revealed two important findings: firstly, network centrality has positively and significantly effect on business performance. Secondly, family members networking and network density have positively but not significant effect on business performance.

Cisi, Devicienti, Manello, and Vannoni (2016) Using a large sample of Italian small and medium enterprises (SMEs), investigated the effect of membership in a formal business network on firms' economic performance. They found that network participation has a positive effect on value-added and exports, but not on profitability. The advantages of networking are stronger in the case of smaller SMEs, firms operating in traditional and in more turbulent markets, firms located in less developed areas and firms not already exploiting the weaker ties offered by industrial districts. Network characteristics, such as size, geographical dispersion and diversity were also found to influence performance.

Omwenga, Mukulu, and Kanali (2013) carried out a survey among the women across Nairobi County. The sample comprised of 158 small and medium women entrepreneurs. Data were subjected to computer-aided statistical analysis that included descriptive statistic, ANOVA and regression techniques. The results revealed that networking is a determinant of the performance of women-owned enterprises. The P-value of 0.000 (Less than 0.05) implies that the model of networking on performance of the enterprises is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Research Gaps

The study has presented several limitations despite there being significant contribution in the findings. For instance, Cisi, Devicienti, Manello, and Vannoni (2016) targeted large sample of Italian small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Maina et al., (2016) looked into the performance of

Kenyan Small and Medium Enterprises while Oirere (2015) examined the effect of innovation on the financial performance of small and medium manufacturing enterprises in Nairobi County. These studies did not present the specific findings targeting the Growth of Women MicroEnterprises in Kenya. This presents a conceptual and contextual gap that forms the basis of the current study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the case of this study, a descriptive survey research design was used to assess the entrepreneurship strategies and growth of Women-led micro-enterprises. The target population was 372 licensed micro-enterprises as per register records in Ongata Rongai Sub-County Offices (Thinji, 2018). The study sampled 189 respondents from the 372 licensed micro-enterprises as per register records in Ongata Rongai Sub-County Offices. The key data collection instrument that was used in this study was the structured questionnaire. Data from the questionnaire were coded and logged in the computer using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 21). The study used both the descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data. The findings were presented in form of tables. The significance of the coefficients, r and F values was set at the 95% confidence level.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION Response Rate

During the data collection process, one hundred and eighty-nine questionnaires were issued out. However, not all of the respondents were able to complete the instruments and return them back for analysis. As such, only one hundred and thirty questionnaires were returned for analysis. During the review of the returned questionnaires, the researcher realized that there were ten questionnaires which had not been filled correctly hence they were not included in the analysis. The remaining instruments that were used for analysis were one hundred and twenty. This translates to a response rate of 63.5%.

Descriptive results Innovation and Growth of Women Enterprises

Table 1: Innovation and Growth of Women Enterprises

Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD
	%	%	%	%	%
a. Innovation has been able to stabilize my business and increase competitive advantage.	34.6	34.6	15.4	11.5	3.8
b. Through innovation, I have been able to increase the savings of my business.	57.7	34.6	7.7	-	-

c. Innovation has positively influenced the ability to generate more income in my business.	34.6	42.3	19.2	-	3.8
d. Being innovative has improved the quality of goods and services offered to my customers.	23.1	50.0	23.1	-	3.8
e. Innovation had reduced the operating cost of my business.	42.3	42.3	7.7	7.7	-

Key: SA- Strongly Agree, A-Agree, UD-Uncecided, D-Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

A majority (69.2%) strongly agreed and agreed to the statement that innovation has been able to stabilize my business and increase competitive advantage. A few (15.8%) were undecided whereas the remaining 15.3% were in disagreement with the statement. Slightly more than half (57.7%) strongly agreed that through innovation, they have been able to increase the savings of their business. This was further supported by 34.6% who agreed with the statement. The remaining 7.7% were undecided. In terms of generating more income, 42.3% agreed and 34.6% strongly agreed that innovation has positively influenced the ability to generate more income in their business. A few (19.2%) were undecided whereas 3.8% strongly disagreed. Half (50%) agreed that being innovative has improved the quality of goods and services offered to the customers. 23.1% strongly agreed or were undecided with the statement. The remaining 3.8% strongly disagreed. With regards to the reduction of operational cost, 84.6% were positive that innovation had reduced the operating cost of my business. On the other hand, 7.7% were either undecided or in disagreement with the statement.

Networking and Growth of Women Enterprises Table 2: Networking and Growth of Women-Led Enterprises

Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD
	%	%	%	%	%
a. I have a network of people from different businesses.	52.2	7.5	16.4	11.9	11.9
b. The size of my network has enabled me to improve the growth of my business.	64.2	16.4	13.4	6.0	-
c. I have been able to create my network from different platforms such as social media and place of work.	67.2	14.9	4.5	4.5	9.0
d. The network I have obtained from the different networking platforms has boosted the growth of my business.	64.2	19.4	4.5	11.9	-
e. Diverse networks have increased the number of new business acquisition through referrals.	73.1	16.4	3.0	3.0	4.5

Key: SA- Strongly Agree, A-Agree, UD-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

Slightly more than half (52.2%) strongly agreed that they have a network of people from different businesses. A few (16.4%) were undecided whereas 11.9% disagreed with the statement. A majority (64.2%) strongly agreed that the size of their network has enabled them to improve the growth of their business. This was further supported by 16.4% of the respondents who agreed with the statement. The remaining 13.4% and 6% were undecided and disagreed respectively. Slightly more than two thirds (67.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they have been able to create their network from different platforms such as social media and place of work. A few (14.9%) were also positive to the statement by agreeing. The remaining 13.5% of the respondents were negative by strongly disagreeing and disagreeing respectively. A majority (83.6%) were positive to the statement that the network obtained from the different networking platforms has boosted the growth of their business. A few (11.9%) disagreed with the statement whereas the remaining 4.5% of the respondents remained undecided. A majority (73.1%) strongly agreed and 16.4% agreed that diverse networks have increased the number of new business acquisition through referrals. On the other hand, 7.5% remained negative and 3% undecided on the matter.

Growth of Women-Led Enterprises Table 3: Growth of Women-Led Enterprises

	Very true	Not True	No Response
	%	%	%
a. The net profit for my business has increased over the past three years.	50	45	5
b. I have been able to increase the number of customers over the past three years.	60	30	10
c. The sales volume of the business has increased over the past three years.	80	20	-

In terms of business growth, it is evident that the net profit (50%), the number of customers (60%) and sales volume (80%) has increased over the past three years. However, there are still those who are facing a challenge in improving the growth of their business.

Inferential results Table 4: Model Summary

<u>Model</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R Square</u>	<u>Adjusted R Square</u>	<u>Std. Error of the Estimate</u>
1	.905 ^a	.820	.817	2.17886

a Predictors: (Constant), Innovation, Networking, Entrepreneurial Training, Entrepreneurial Finance

From the model summary, the findings show that the coefficient of correlation R was 0.905, an indication of a strong positive correlation between variables. Adjusted R squared was 0.817 which translates to 81.7%, this indicates that 81.7% variations on the growth of women-led enterprises

are explained by the four independent variables; innovation, networking, entrepreneurial training, and entrepreneurial finance. The residual of 18.3% can be explained by other factors beyond the scope of the current study. These findings agree with Oirere (2015) examined the effect of innovation on the financial performance of small and medium manufacturing enterprises in Nairobi County. It was revealed that combination of the use of computers, implementation of online sales through the internet, training, and development of employees, level of expertise employed, adoption of technology, the introduction of new branches/business and introduction of new products/services contributed to 73% of financial performance.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Coffee pricing	Regression	6123.011	4	1530.753	322.437	.000 ^b
	Residual	1348.276	115	4.747		
	Total	7471.287	119			

a Dependent Variable: Growth of Women-Led Enterprises b Predictors: (Constant), Innovation, Networking, Entrepreneurial Training, and Entrepreneurial Finance.

An ANOVA was carried out at 95% significant level. As shown by Table 4.8, the p-value was $0.00 < 0.05$, this shows that the independent variables (innovation, networking, entrepreneurial training, and entrepreneurial finance) significantly influenced the growth of women-led enterprises.

Table 6: Coefficients of Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	β	Std. Error			
(Constant)	6.326	1.174		5.389	.000
Innovation	.175	.050	.224	3.518	.001
Networking	.161	.046	.176	3.505	.001
Entrepreneurial Training	.338	.042	.392	8.022	.000
Entrepreneurial Finance	.208	.052	.190	4.009	.000

a Dependent Variable: Growth of Women-Led Enterprises

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + e$$

The study noted that Innovation ($\beta=0.175$, $p=0.000$), Networking ($\beta=0.161$, $p=0.000$) Entrepreneurial Training ($\beta=0.338$, $p=0.000$) and Entrepreneurial Finance ($\beta=0.208$, $p=0.000$) had a positive and significant relationship with the growth of women led MSEs in Likuyani Sub County. The findings established that holding all other factors constant, growth of women-led enterprises in Ongata Rongai would be at 6.326. A unit increase in innovation holding other factors constant leads to growth of women-led enterprises by 0.175. A unit increase in networking while holding other factors constant leads to growth of women-led enterprises by 0.161. A unit increase in entrepreneurial training while holding other factors constant leads to growth of women-led enterprises by 0.338. A unit increase in entrepreneurial finance while holding other factors constant leads to growth of women-led enterprises by 0.208. These findings agree with Cisi, Devicienti, Manello, and Vannoni (2016) who found that network participation has a positive effect on value-added and exports, but not on profitability. Likewise, Omwenga, Mukulu, and Kanali (2013) revealed that networking is a positive determinant of the performance of women-owned enterprises.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS Summary of Findings

The findings established holding all other factors constant, growth of women-led enterprises in Ongata Rongai would be at 6.326. A unit increase in innovation holding other factors constant, growth of women-led enterprises would be at 0.175. A unit increase in networking while holding other factors constant, growth of women-led enterprises would be at 0.161. A unit increase in entrepreneurial training while holding other factors constant, growth of women-led enterprises would be at 0.338.

Conclusions

From the analysis and summary of the findings, a number of conclusions were made. Innovation is an important strategy for the growth of women-led enterprises. Despite a number of entrepreneurs introducing technology to their business, there are still a number of entrepreneurs who have not been able to grasp the benefits of innovation. They are still stuck to the old ways of doing and hence limit the potential of revenue generation that their business may have. Innovation has been found to have a positive association ($\text{Beta}=0.175$) and significant influence ($p=0.001$) on the growth of women-led enterprises.

Networking has also been established to have a significant influence on the overall growth of women-led enterprises. Through networking practices, the entrepreneurs are able to get new customers from referrals and hence increasing the volume of sales. However, a major challenge is that there are entrepreneurs who do not frequently network and this has a drawback to the growth of the business.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided. There is a need for opportunities to be created that can help women entrepreneurs to network with other individuals from various professions on a regular basis. This is because there are many women who have not been able to attend workshops and seminars that may help create networks which may boost the growth of their businesses.

Women entrepreneurs should also seek more training in entrepreneurship skills. There are many women who have not had the opportunity to receive training on skills such as financial management, innovation. Acquiring skills in these areas may have a significant influence on the growth of women-led enterprises in the area.

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