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The Growth of Women Businesses in Small to Medium Enterprises: A Review of the Critical Success Factors for Sustainable Growth

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to provide an inventory of critical success factors obtainable from women entrepreneurs. Many studies have acknowledged the Small to Medium enterprises as the key driver of many economies in developing countries and are the genesis of large corporations. The majority stakeholders in this sector are women and hence the study focused on the key factors that 'strengthened' women run enterprises to succeed against a background of several other female and male SMEs failing to live to their expectations. A qualitative case based research philosophy was adopted and data was collected through in-depth interviews. The findings of the study indicated that the Critical success factors were strategy, vision and leadership style factor, innovation and sustainability, product lifecycle shortness and technological adaptation and powerful networks. The results of the study can be used to formulate practical policies and an indigenous business model be framed.

Keywords: Critical success factors, sustainability, women entrepreneur, women owned enterprises

1. Introduction

Women's economic activities, particularly in self-employment, empower them economically and enable them to contribute more to the development of their country (Katwalo and Madichie, 2008). Existing statistics confirm that women's economic activities play a crucial role in the growth of many of the world economies (Minniti et al, 2005). Many women owned enterprises (WOEs) have failed to live to their promises due to various obstacles that have hindered their success. However, we have had entrepreneurial dissidents (defined by me as those women who have defied odds by successfully growing their business, unexpected of by society, given the stereotype and perceptions they have) who have defied all odds and have successfully built their enterprises in both harsh and stable environments. The purpose of this study is to draw inspiration and make an appraisal of the factors that do facilitate or make WOEs successful (critical success factors (CSFs)). Most studies tend to focus more on causes of failure, failure rate, why women are not like their male counterparts, gender imbalances and all sort of negative representations by WOEs. Contrary to these forms of study, I have always wondered why some women are able to make it-meaning they are important factors(CSFs) that needs to be examined and discussed for sharing with many in businesses cycles and even those who intend to venture into businesses. Ultimately, there is need to develop an indigenous critical success factor model that can be emulated and will assist the informal and forma sectors to grow their businesses successfully in both turbulent and non-turbulent environments. Bearing in mind that SMEs are the leading force in the development of African economies and that there are essential for economic growth in many developing nations, entrepreneurial activities of women, who are the majority in this sector requires closer attention (Mear and Liedholm,1998). Japan, for example, has six million SMEs which account for 99.7% of all businesses in the country, and 70% of total labour force (METI, 2007). In Taiwan, 96% small firms are SMEs and employ 78% of the nation's workforce (Lin, 1988). Results of the study by Lee (1998) indicate that South Korea SMEs provide more than 70% of all jobs in the country. In Ghana, 70% Of the workforce in the country is employees by SMEs that have> 5 people (Government of Ghana, 2303; World Bank, 2010). In Zimbabwe more than 90% of labour force work in the SMEs sector (CSO, 2011). This snap survey shows how important WOEs are, hence the need to carryout research on those areas that make WOEs tick. This is an attempt by the researcher to make what is good better, what is better best and what is best better.

Women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe play a critical and important role in the economy of the country with regard to income and employment creation. Women have gained tremendously from national liberation and disassembling of white colonial rule that characterised the pre-1980 period by being able to advance their rights and interests in engaging in businesses activities as independent cadres without male expenditures as was then. While many WOEs face challenges that hinder them to grow sustainably, entrepreneurial heroes (EHs) have emerged in the process, turning existing obstacles and challenges into opportunities for growth and development. Most areas that women have proved to be good at from general observation include craft, tourism and hospitality, education with reference to early childhood development (ECD), retailing, and food industry.

2. Statement of the Problem

The study was motivated by media reports and existing studies that tend to focus on failure by women entrepreneurs to effectively compete with their male counterparts, barriers and challenges encountered, gender issues, affirmative action and other negativities affecting women entrepreneurs. In the same environment from which reports and studies were coming out they were many successful women entrepreneurs and I did not come across intense reports on what I would refer to as “causal success determinants” which were given enough attention. This study therefore is fully feminist in outlook and believes in reporting on what is positive about women and what positive things can do to enhance performance of women entrepreneurs.

3. Research Questions

Given the above scenario on the research problem, the study posits the following major research question anchored by subsequent sub questions?

3.1. Primary Research Question

- What are the critical success factors (CSFs) for women owned enterprises?

3.2. Sub Questions

- What are the key obstacles that hinder success and how can these be turned into opportunities for sustainable development?
- What indigenous knowledge system(s) and models can be considered to enable continued sustainability of women owned enterprises?

4. Research Objectives

Therefore, given the above research questions, the following research objectives were posited.

4.1. Primary Research Objective

- To uncover and delineate on critical success factors for women entrepreneurs

4.2. Sub Research Objectives

- To identify key barriers that hinders success and deduces how these can be turned into opportunities
- To identify, assess and derive appropriate indigenous knowledge systems and models that can be adopted to allow continued success and economic sustainability of women owned enterprises.

5. Significance of the Study

The study provided further fertile grounds for policy makers to take into account CSFs and use these for designing policies that have a practical orientation towards sustainable development. Many women in SMEs and have been facing obstacles can draw lessons from the study and turn the challenges they face into opportunities. Interested researchers can take this study for further research and debate, keeping the feminist world alight through active engagement.

6. Methodology

The determination of an appropriate methodology can be described as: “The strategy, plan of action, process and design lying behind the choice of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes”. (Crotty, 1998).

While there are numerous epistemologies, this study employed only two of these because of their applicability. This seems rather profound and not something to which researcher normally gives much thought. Yet the way the researcher think about the development of knowledge affects the way researcher goes through research. Using an interpretivist (phenomenology) framework and systems thinking, when the focus of a study is on understanding and interpretation of critical success factors, the researcher was encouraged to apply personal experience and prior knowledge rather than just being a detached observer. This framework accepts influences from both science and personal experience (Carson et al 2001). As a result, a model that is developed based on an interpretivist framework (suggesting a qualitative approach) was adopted. According to Yin (1994) a research design is the logic that links the data to be collected to the initial questions of the study. The research design for this study is the action plan for ‘getting from here to there’. ‘Here’, being identified by the initial set of research questions and ‘there’ by a set of ‘conclusions or answers about the questions’. In short, I would refer to the research design as a blueprint of the research project. Between ‘here’ and ‘there’ a number of major steps are found (data collection and analysis of relevant data). Logical sequence of the design is important to achieve credible results and in addressing the initial research questions (Yin, 1984; Mounon, 2002). Merriam (1998) asserts that choosing a research design requires understanding the philosophical foundations underlying the type of research and one’s personality, attributes and skills, and becoming informed as to the design choices available to you in paradigm. Clearly such a relationship does exist, and it is for this reason that the Case study research design, adopting a phenomenological approach, aided by systems thinking was considered important for this study. The population of this study consisted of all successful women entrepreneurs in Harare, Bulawayo and Masvingo. The majority of SMEs are found in Harare and Bulawayo. The sample size, in the next page was limited to 20 SMEs.

Type of sub-sector industry	Harare	Bulawayo	Masvingo
Retailing	1	1	1
Beauty parlours	1	1	1
Manufacturing	1	1	-
Textiles	1	1	1
Agriculture/Poultry	2	1	2
Hospitality	2	2	1
Total	8	6	6

Table 1: Sample Size by Industry and Town

Twenty successful enterprises were judgementally or purposively chosen from each of the three cities using information obtained from Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises. Judgemental or purposive sampling was considered by (Coffey, 1999) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling, to identify the primary participants. The researcher has to select this method based on his judgment and the purpose of the research (Babbie, 1995; Grieg & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997), looking at the entrepreneurs who appear to have succeeded in relationship to the phenomenon under scrutiny. I actively selected the most productive sample that provided the study with answers to the research questions (Schostak and Schostak, 2008). Data was gathered through in-depth interviews with the real owners of the enterprises or Managers in charge observations and literature review complemented field research. The qualitative data resultant from the unstructured questionnaire guides followed a thematic approach in its description and interpretation of the findings.

7. Literature Review

Various studies have been undertaken in the area of SMEs competencies and critical success factors in various parts of the world. In developing countries such as Zimbabwe, the vast majority of women owned enterprises are from one person establishment to five/(Mwega,1991).This has tended to ensure that the journey of SMEs entrepreneur is short-lived, with statistics of SMEs failure rate in Africa being put at 99 percent (Mead & Liedholm,1998; Rodgerson,2000).The researcher's opinion and views are however that despite the failure rate of SMEs, they are female entrepreneurial dissidents who have defied the odds and have successfully exploited critical requirements for sustainable continuity and growth of their enterprises .

7.1. Competence Development

Competencies can be said to be present or at play in a company or enterprise. Authors and writer have proposed several definitions of competencies (Boyatzis, 1982; Caird, 1992; Katwalo, 2006). All the definitions given points at 'the notion of being able to' suggesting ability to do or perform. Competence development calls for a deliberate that accounts for and nurture knowledge and know-how or making use of intellectual capital that has been formalised, captured, leveraged to produce a higher value asset or gains. The successful women entrepreneurs are those who exhibit this form of material capital, the material capital that provides sustainable development. Ray (1993) argues that in order to understand why some SMEs succeed in their businesses and others fail, it is paramount to study the entrepreneur's personality or attributes, the entrepreneur's background and experience, and the entrepreneur's skills, including how they learn.

7.2. Critical Success Factors

In general, these are key determinants for success. Those factors which directly determines success or failure of an enterprise. A key success factor is any competitive asset or competence that is needed to win in the market place whether it is strategic competitive advantage, actually representing a sustainable point of advantage or merely a point of parity with the company's competitor. Aker contends that 'the firm that gain position in the short run and become contenders for winning in the long run will address those key success factors, and differentiate between actual key success factors and emerging key success factors. In turbulent environments, critical success factors are not constant and hence the need for continuous environmental scanning. It is important to focus on Sustainable African SMEs as those that are able to successfully attend to their CSFs that relate to their output environments such as customer needs and demand growth, in accordance with Wilson and Gillagan,2005) 's assertion. The assumption here is that the SMEs should then be able pursuing their grand strategy making use of their distinctive competencies. Motivations of the owner of the enterprise are a CSF on its own right. From the strategic adaptation, motivation and life cycle views on firm growth, the reason for starting the firm, orientations towards growth and success of small business (Kazanjain & Drazin, 1989; Deak&Freel,1998; Cope,1999, Rogerson, 2000 and GEMS, 2006). Experience and the educational attainment have a bearing on success of SMEs though debatable. From specifically the resource based view, life cycle view and the quantitative studies (Changanti, 1989, Dodge and Robbins, 1999; GEMS, 2006), the level of educational attainment, business acumen, experience at managing small businesses and personal network were all identified as critical success areas for the success of small businesses. A key ingredient to continuous survival and growth is the element of systems thinking. Many studies show that, a unifying theme for women business owners is the ability to understand their business as a system and therefore unravel the manifested issues (Adizes, 1981; Greiner, 1972; Hill et al, 2002). It is paramount that the owner must be in a position to understand the internal and external systems that affect the firm. The state of the industry has a direct bearing on the success of women entrepreneurs. The macro environmental factors directly determine the success of the firm. Research by (Hakkert et al., 2006) presents the view that the motivation theory provides the insight on the probability of business success and its linkage to the owner's perception of the external environment. Hence women entrepreneurs,

who survived, for example the economic turbulence that characterised Zimbabwe between 1997 and 2013 had to a greater extent been motivated by their perceptions on the environment which kept them on their toes.

Research findings from a study of Nigerian women business owners showed that a high self-concept regarding their role in business and a commitment to business can help women to become more successful entrepreneurs (Ehigie & Umoren, 2003). The report further indicated that entrepreneurial success depends on psychological factors such as self-concept, managerial competence, work stress and business commitment. Other studies have shown that several factors act as CSFs and amongst common ones are networking, innovation, role of leadership, economic stability, enterprise density, access to finance, efficient labour, positive culture, market opportunity factors, company demography, size of the firm, community networks, organisational structure, product quality, specific experience, competencies, capabilities and skills, family upbringing, business ownership experience and other related factors (Santos, 2001; Rogerson, 2001; GEM, 2006; Bolton and Thompson, 2004; Bygrave, 1998; Westhead et al. 2005; Thornhill and Armit, 2003).

8. Results and Analysis

The results of the study are discussed in the next sessions.

8.1. Demographics

The profiles of the respondents are summarised in the table below indicating education qualifications, age, and marital status.

Entrepreneur	Age	Education	Marital status	Type of Business	Duration	Ownership structure
X1	32	degree	Married	Retailing	4	Sole proprietor (S/P)
X2	48	O Level	Widowed	Retailing	10	S/P
X3	45	Certificate	Single	Textiles	11	Partnership
X4	34	Diploma	Married	Textiles	6	Partnership
X5	50	ZJC	Single	Hospitality	15	Partnership
X6	37	Certificates	Married	Hospitality	11	S/P
X7	29	A Level	Single	Beauty /P	5	Partnership
X8	31	degree	Married	Manufacturing	4	Partnership
X9	41	A Level	Widowed	Retailing	15	S/P
X10	24	A level	Single	Beauty/P	4	Partnership
X11	34	Diploma	Married	Retailing	7	Partnership
X12	55	O Level	Single	Hospitality	12	s/p
X13	25	Diploma	Married	Textiles	3	S/P
X14	26	A Level	Single	Beauty /P	3	Partnership
X15	30	A level	Married	Retailing	5	S/P
X16	40	O Level	Widowed	Retailing	9	Cooperative
X17	40	Certificate	Single	Textiles	11	S/P
X18	36	Diploma	Married	Textiles	6	S/P
X19	60	ZJC	Single	Manufacturing	8	S/P
X20	50	Degree	Married	Hospitality	11	Partnership
X21	27	A Level	Single	Beauty /P	5	S/P

Table 2: Demographic Profiling

The respondents are represented by X for anonymity purposes. The majority of the respondents were aged between 24 and 55. The majority of them had received secondary and tertiary education implying knowledge ability on issues of business. More than 50% are married with a few singles. The partnership type of structure is partnership with female co-owners and no male partner in the formation. In the majority of cases the other partner is more of a sleeping partner exception one instance where the partners have 50% shares a-piece. As reflected in the table all of them are in service related industry (traditional sector) for female enterprises. Two entrepreneurs have ventured into manufacturing detergents and bricks respectively, a traditionally male dominated area.

8.2. Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for Women Owned Enterprises

Respondents were probed to find out what made their businesses successful even during turbulent times. A number of factors emerged as common determinants of success.

8.2.1. Factor 1: Strategy, Vision and Leadership Style

Respondents were asked on the value of strategic planning and its connectedness to their success and 98% concurred to the effect that without strategic planning their businesses could have long closed. The key issue raised was that one needed to have a dream, a vision for the future and adopt a correct leadership style. This would then guide you and provide a platform for further deliverance, despite the challenges of strategic planning in a turbulent environment, the felt one still needs to have dream which you can constantly track and make changes to suit the macro environmental demands. The sentiments of some of the respondents were:

“For SMEs, strategy is a visionary process that best relates to business and operational strategy through a strategic framework that inscribes market assessment, plan formulation and implementation and then evaluation. You cannot afford not to do this, if you really want to be viable.

“Knowing where one is now and where you want to go and how to get there is a critical ingredient for this venture. I always told myself that things have to be done this where...remember this saying ‘if you are not sure of where you are going you will end up somewhere and not even realize that you are there’.

Most small businesses lack a formal planning mode of planning and this explains clearly that the key reason for failure for SMEs is not only lack of access to finance, but also lack of planning.

8.2.2. Factor 2: Sustainability and Innovation

Customer’s tastes quickly fad and customer’s demands and expectations are driving force behind innovation and therefore innovative and creative thinking is a pre requisite (Janszen, 2000). This was termed a very important success factor by all the respondents except one who felt that her business has survived the harsh times because of her ability to offering similar and traditional products in the region of Bulawayo for more than twenty years now and offering anything new will be detrimental to her success. Innovation has the greatest effects on the sustainability of an organisation. Research by Kearney, (2008) showed that organizations which take into account the sustainability through innovation as their business strategy are the ones that outperform in the global world. Some interesting sentiments and lived experiences were reflected in the following statement:

“You do not only concentrate on product and service innovation, if you want to thrive and grow; my company has been embarking on a social crusade for the past eight years focusing on social innovation. We have interest in the social well-being of the people, the communities around us, we are socially responsible, we sponsor community projects, social events, we are just part of the bigger Community and this is us.

8.2.3. Factor 3: Life Cycle of Products and Employing Modern Technology

About 78% of the respondents felt that, their success can be credited to their ability to continuously bring in new products and or rejuvenate the existing ones and also adoption of new technologies in their business processes. “One needs computers, internet to be able to communicate with many customers”

“All my employees have been trained on how to use computers”

“Old products needs quick replacement “

8.2.4. Factor 4: Dealing with Competition and Offering Superior Quality

All the 21 respondents concurred that their success was a result of their ability to provide superior quality products and services than their competitors. Being able to provide superior quality is a function of the ability of the firm to understand customer needs and meeting better than the competitor. This is what scholars like Pelham and Wilson, (1996) referred to as the customer orientation. Through forging close relations with customers, the respondents alluded that they were able to identify their needs, fill the gaps not filled by competitors-thus effectively creating niches, and improve on service delivery. These were some of the sentiments coming from the entrepreneurs per se:

“Competition is healthy and it keeps you awake...you need to make quality products that meet the needs of your customer

“My brother, just get in my workshop and see, my designers are having a meeting with three of our business partners. You may want to know why we call them business partners. When we started this company of dressmaking, we used to call people who buy from us ‘customers’, then we changed to ‘clients’ and now we call them business partners. It is more user- friendly. We have attracted so many of our partners from our sisters and brothers (competitors) because of service quality”

“The days of mass production are over. Every customer is a distinct segment for us and we treat them differently because people are differently.

“We do not compete with anyone; we focus on what needs our clients need”

8.2.5. Factor 5: Effective Networking

One of the key revelations that have facilitated the success and growth of WOE is the ability to Network. Of the 21 entrepreneurs 90% had created strong networks and did belong to different business associations such as WABAZ, Women in Business and many others. 60% of these entrepreneurs happened to know each other and meet at various business platforms in Harare and Bulawayo and other parts of Zimbabwe. The critical point raised was that networking provides energy that one would not have, if one decides to isolate self. Some of the sentiments echoed were:

“You cannot afford to stay aloof...things happen out there”

“The more networks you create, the more business opportunities you are opening”

“You just need to invest in networks if you are serious about your future”

Many research studies (Green et al., 2003; Brush et al., 2004, 2005) have demonstrated that networks and network contacts play an important role in the establishment, development and growth of enterprises as they help in accessing resources. Literature shows women entrepreneurs possess different network structures, for example, less outreaching and more homogenous networks and a different network behaviour which is more focussed on emotional support than strategic networking when compared to men. The above five critical factors (Sustainability and innovation, strategy, vision and leadership, effective networking, dealing with

competition and superior quality) received overwhelming concurrence by respondents with mean ranging from 4.55 to 4.99. Apart from these five factors, they were several CSFs that emerged and are listed in the next table.

➤ Other CSFs

Mean scores for factors contributing to WOE's success

5=extremely important, 4=very important, 3= important, 2=not very important, 1=unimportant

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Appropriate Marketing	4.28	0.99
Effective Website	2.94	1.32
Good managerial skills	3.94	0.91
Committed workforce	4.27	1.05
Friendliness to customers	3.88	1.10
Supply chain management	3.03	1.53
Previous business experience	3.63	1.22
Reputation for honest	4.03	1.83
Community involvement	3.67	1.27
Support of family and friends	3.42	1.48
Sheer hard work	3.91	0.99
SERVQUAL	4.22	1.54
Access to capital	2.92	1.36
Product and service promotion	3.38	1.36
Government support	3.41	1.49
Location	4.27	0.81
Record keeping	3.66	1.11
Ample parking for customers	2.86	1.19
Business training	3.91	0.96
Political involvement	2.46	1.23
Good pricing strategy	3.23	1.12
Management of personnel	4.04	1.07

Table 3: Critical Success Factors

The above CSFs received rating between 2.46 for political involvement to 4.28 for appropriate marketing. No factor got a mean below two and this implies that successful companies could only further enhance their success by continuously taking note of the wide combination of these factors.

8.3. Key Obstacles that Hinder Success and how they can be turned into Opportunities for Sustainable Development

While it can be acknowledged that the respondents in this study were able to succeed due to the nature of competencies they created for themselves, this did not mean that they did not face challenges in their day to day business operations. More than 70% Of the respondents faced many challenges which however they were able to resist and forge ahead. The major challenges that slowed their growth included limited access to latest technology (60%), limited skills for diversification purposes (70%), inadequate infrastructure and utilities (80%), limited access to finance (50%), few networks (40%), dual responsibilities (30%) and limited enabling environment (90%).\

The above responses are supported by statement coming from the respondents:

“I am quite pleased with the growth of my company but I have had problems of infrastructure, I need space for expansion”

“The current policies and the general business environment is prohibitive...I could have doubled my business if the environment was stable”

“We face challenges of accessing funds from the bank, the process is laborious and unfriendly...*Chikwiribidi chawandisa mhani* (meaning too much of deals and corrupt activities).

“Being a mother, wife and business woman creates pressure on time, I have to fulfil all the roles otherwise things will not work out. *Varume vemuzimbabwe* (Zimbabwean men) still want us to serve them at home otherwise *vanotoramusikanawebasa* (they will marry the maid), hence we are forced to share our time...*ndopanenyaya ipapo* (that's where the problem is).

The result of this study concurs with Studies by (Bardasi et al., 2007; Dejene, 2007; and Grown, 2005) which shows that in Africa women entrepreneurs face similar obstacles, what may only differ are the levels of intensity and deep rootedness of the constraints.

8.4. Indigenous Knowledge System(S) and Models Considerable for Sustainability of Women Owned Enterprises

Continued sustainability by women entrepreneurs requires an indigenous model blended with market driven systems. The majority of the respondents (96%) shared the sentiments that African entrepreneur tend to fail to use their indigenous backgrounds in running their

enterprise and instead copy a lot of undesirable things from the west and now east as well. Issues that emerged from the open discussions held include”

“We sometimes err by conducting important business in English, *pasinakana murungu tinongozvishungurudza* (without the present of a white man, we trouble ourselves in conducting important meetings in English)

“We were brought up knowing that a woman is a mother and leader, and if the same motherliness is employed at work employees will ever be happy and productivity would increase”

“Getting and allowing traditions and customs that promote growth of my business has helped me a lot. Every year, I brew traditional beer, within these premises and we have our celebrations where we even share ideas with friends and relatives. We blend that with prayers”.

“Western life styles have diluted our culture of doing things and sometimes you want to show the *Africanness* in the way you do your business and do not get support from society...it is a cultural burden that we deny our own ways of doing things in favour of foreign flavours.”

9. Discussions

The results of the study show that it is imperative for sustainable development of women entrepreneurs, the focus should be more on creating sustainability through creative solutions, innovation and changing mind-sets of leadership who should begin to see change a necessary evil for success. The CSFs that sustains many WOEs include, apart from the above network creation, business experiences, quality service and products, committed workforce, ability to diversify, ability to carry out continuous environmental scanning, marketing ability, record keeping, community involvement. Women entrepreneurs are by and large expected to emphasis on innovation (both technical and social), sustainability. A closer look at the results also reveals that despite key competencies created by women entrepreneurs, they are also faced with challenges that slackens and slows rate of growth. Factors that emerged strongly included lack of access to finance, cultural barriers, poor infrastructure and unfriendly policies by government, notwithstanding the impact of the macro environment on the operations of their business. The need to adopt an indigenous business framework is critical, an approach to business that does not negate the *Africanness* needed to keep to our roots, not an attempt to appease the ancestors but to promote enterprises the African way, just like the Japanese do it their way, the Chinese do it the Chinese way and Americans- the American way, Europeans-the European way and together we can meet the Global way.

10. Recommendations

- Given the outcomes from this study, the researcher recommends that key competencies that have made life easier for successful SMEs can be copied by those firms that are struggling and those at the verge of closing. It does not however imply that a formula adopted by company X will holistically work if applied by company Y.
- Sustainable innovation and transformative leadership are critical apparatus needed to experiment success.
- Government with its relevant departments must create a database where all successful entrepreneurs are entered. These must be used as developmental and launch –new firms case references. Government can also support them financially once they are entered in the data base.
- Most women entrepreneurs must learn to network and professionally manage their enterprise.
- Employing an Indigenous business framework is paramount for sustainable development. The need to be African in our approaches without of course negating other cultures elsewhere is a good starting point for SMEs.
- Policy makers can draw key platforms and create an operational manual for successful enterprise.

11. Further Research

Due to limited size of the sample size, it would be overzealous to conclude that the study’s findings can sufficiently explain all CSFs for women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe and beyond. More data is needed on critical CSFs such as Leadership style, for instance one style may give different results from the other. Therefore, they may be needed to look at these styles in a separate study. Issues to with innovation and networks. Researchers may want to delineate CSFs in stable business environments versus those in turbulent business environment.

12. Conclusion

Greater attention needs to be paid to the development of SMEs through emulating and using those that have managed succeeds as role models for national development purposes. Women entrepreneurs need specialised attention so that policies created for SMEs are not sweeping policies but takes a segmentation approach. The women leaders are thus required to increase research efficiency, encourage open innovation, and emphasize more on sustainability and social innovation by delivering benefits on low cost and use a more structured approach to innovation and technology platforms. This is the only way to sustainability of WOEs.

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