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Women entrepreneurship, intersectionality, and networks in firm performance.

JAMES, I. and IBUKUN, T.

2023

The file accompanying this output contains the extended abstract as published in the book of abstracts, available from <https://tinyurl.com/sefnj3cf>, and the slides used in the presentation, which have been incorporated into a single file on this repository.

Stream Title: Feminist intersectional entrepreneurship: marginalised identities in post-pandemic times. Topic: Women's entrepreneurship in networks and networks of entrepreneurs and solidarity.

Title: Women Entrepreneurship, intersectionality, and Networks on firm performance.

Imaobong James, Tolulope Ibukun and Chioma Onoshakpor

Abstract

Purpose

Research on African women entrepreneurs operating micro and small businesses demonstrates how the agency in enterprising works gender and identity through social capital that fosters businesses. It showed that the shared “otherness” of gender is accompanied by a shared sense of responsibility and social obligation. In time, this spilt over into bridging social capital and connecting to the wider community. Social capital may depend on frequent interaction and proximity, and both are difficult during isolation and social distancing. The COVID-19 crisis thus works as a stress test for adopting digital resources and utilising social relations and resources. Drawing on the network and social capital theories, this study examines how women construct gender and identity differently and how network resources mediate entrepreneurial performance. This study focussed on internal and external networks to explain how women-owned businesses operate as networks influence how organisations are nurtured, managed and sustained.

Originality and Implication

Women entrepreneurs in most parts of Africa are more likely to encounter stereotypes and gender constraints in accessing internal and external network resources. Women are expected to abide by dominant social norms, which project them as intrusive and promiscuous if they actively seek networks with individuals and organisations. Combating intersectionality is one of the most critical issues and mainly affects women entrepreneurs as they are socially marginalised. Entrepreneurship has been shown to facilitate economic and social integration. Recent studies have identified how intersectionality, the use of digital platforms for social connection, and changes in digital media use may outlast the Covid 19 pandemic. Women-led

businesses are adopting new approaches using digital platforms to create new networks and maintain existing network relationships. We examined the complex nature of intersectionality, especially gender, entrepreneurial practices, and the process of women employing online digital platforms to connect and access network resources. We also account for how they responded to developing theories, explanations, and accounts of effective practices to access social resources and improve firm performance.

Design and findings

This study adopted in-depth interviews with 20 Nigerian women business owners during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents who provided information rich on issues related to this study. The criteria include women entrepreneurs within the service sector and across ages and degrees of experience as business owners and are subject to intersectional characteristics, including gender. Each respondent was interviewed thrice before, during and after covid, and themes on gender identity, disadvantages associated with being identified as a woman, and how they mobilised network resources through digital engagement to improve entrepreneurial practices emerged. We adopted grounded theory for data analysis which is particularly useful for examining situated processes and studying complex entities to generate theories. Three coding processes were adopted: open coding, axial and selective coding. This study identified two concepts: how women entrepreneurs mobilised network resources using digital platforms and utilised the disadvantages of gender identity as a strategy to leverage limited resources and improve entrepreneurial practices.

Keywords: Social resourcing, gender, digital engagement, networks, crisis

Intersectionality is an analytical framework for understanding how a person's various social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

Intersectionality identifies multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage.

Introduction

Literature Review

Networks

Social capital – social resourcing

Intersectionality – gender

Covid crisis

Digital engagement

Methodology

Findings and Discussion

Conclusion and recommendation



Women Entrepreneurship, Intersectionality, and Networks on Firm Performance.



Imaobong James and Tolulope Ibukun



Research Aim and Questions

Research Aim:

To examine how women entrepreneurs construct multiple identities and how network resources mediate entrepreneurial performance through digital engagement.

Research Questions:

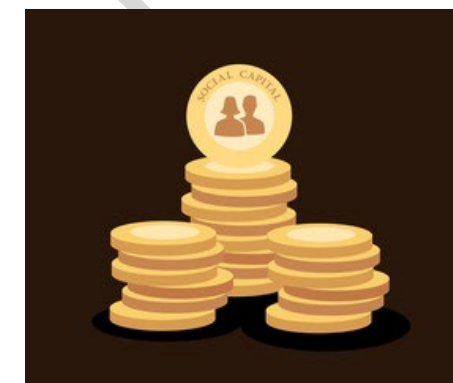
- How was social capital affected and maintained by women entrepreneurs during and after COVID crisis?
- How does digital engagement impact woman-owned business performance?
- How do networks influence enable women entrepreneurs to overcome intersectionality?

Theories and Concepts



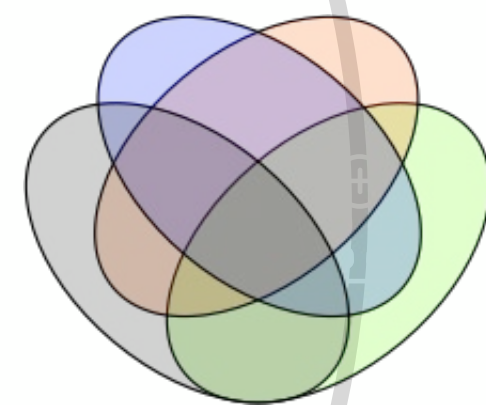
Networks

- Process theory - the process of network formation and utilisation of network resources (Anderson et al., 2010; Hakimpoor et al., 2011)
- Digital connectedness



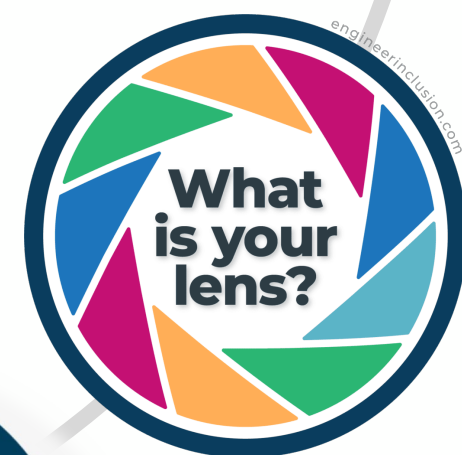
Social Capital

The role of social capital - social resource enables connections in the entrepreneurial context (Hardwick and Anderson, 2013; Anderson and Obeng, 2017).



Intersectionality

- The overlap of multiple social identities, including race, gender, ethnicity, social class and religion (Abbas et al., 2019). Overlapping forms of marginalisation.
- Discrimination and exclusion in a variety of contexts. Socially excluded, is "a feeling of not belonging and not having been given a chance to be included in the society" (Mulunga and Yazdanifard, 2014)



Positionality

- The social and political context that creates one's identity
- Awareness of your personal identities and how they shape your worldview.
- Understanding the complexity of individuals' experiences (Crenshaw, 2013).



Digital Engagement

- Commitment - Trust Theory.
- Virtual connectivity (Drummond et al., 2020)





Research Approach



Data Type

Longitudinal
Qualitative
Data.



Motive

Understand the
experience of women
entrepreneur's
discrimination in
Nigeria and how they
overcome these
challenges



Sampling/ research context

Purposive sampling
South-south
Geopolitical Region
of Nigeria
5 years in business
Minimum of HND



Data Collection

Interviews (F2F and
online)
20 research
participants

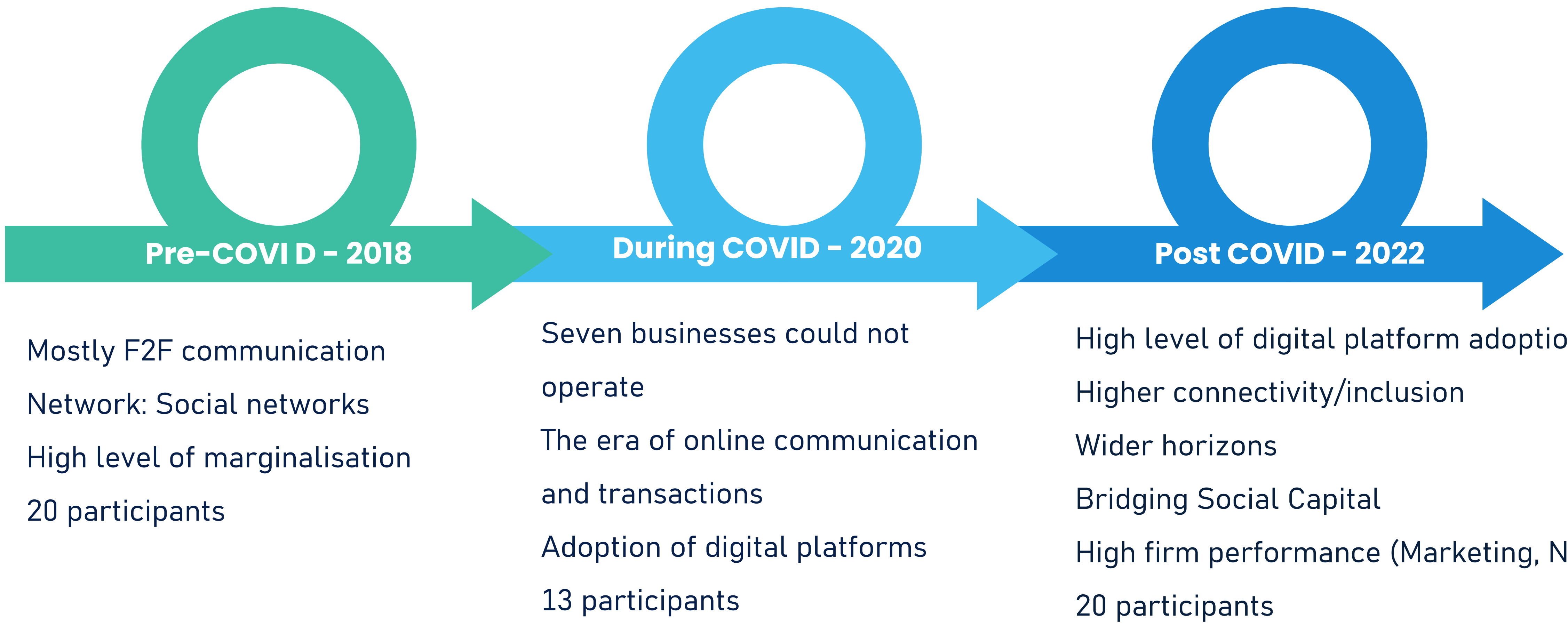


Data Analysis

Theoretical Sampling
Grounded theory
The use of Nvivo

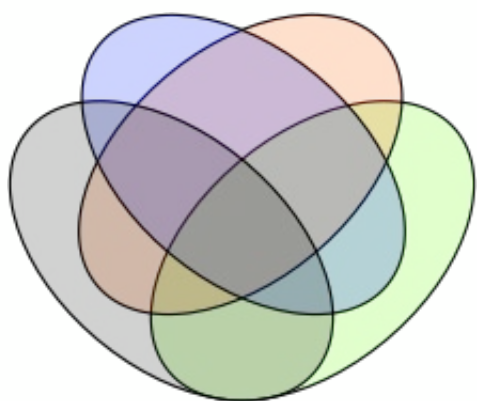


Research Timeline





Study Focus



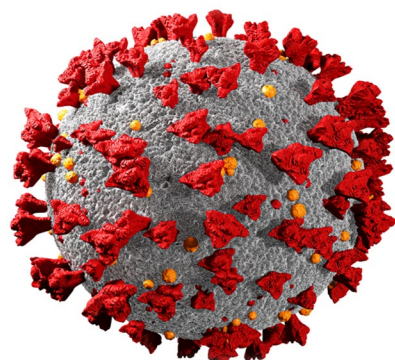
Intersectionality

We examined women entrepreneurs' discriminatory experiences (multidimensionality of marginalised subjects (Crenshaw, 1989) in the Global South.



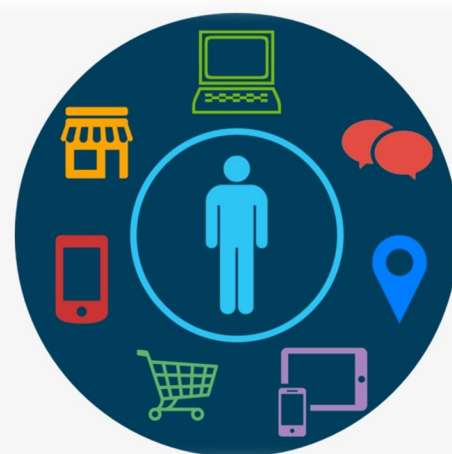
Positionality

Investigating women entrepreneurs' awareness of "their stigma and identity" and how they utilized social resources to overcome marginalisation.



Effect of Covid

The impact of covid crisis on the firm performances of our respondents



Digital Engagement

How digital engagement ameliorate the effect of inequalities
Understand the impact of digital resources on firm performance.



Concepts and categories



Open Coding ➞ Concepts	Axial Coding ➞ Categories
Impact of Covid 19	
Digital skill development	Access to digital resources/ visibility
Establishment of online presence	
Establishment of bridging social capital	Access to diverse resources / inclusive community
Frequent and real-time network interaction	
Impact of Intersectionality	
Discrimination and exclusion	Awareness of identity
Marginalization	
Impact of positionality	
Awareness of personal identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Credibility, communication privileges• Developing coping mechanism
Turning disadvantages into advantages	
Identifying network actors	
Impact of digital Engagement	
Removal of communication barriers	Overcoming intersectionality/social inequality
Access to the wider community	
Improved business visibility	Improved firm performance
Reviews/suggestions/referrals	



Research Findings/Implications



Digital Engagement

The use of digital platforms to overcome intersectionality
Access to the wider community for social integration
Interconnections and interdependence

Covid as a stress test

Development of digital skills
Better communication
Better product advertisement.

Positionality

Self-awareness
Coping strategies
Developing networks
Establishing connections
Empowerment

Research Implications

Developing theory, explanations, and accounts of effective practices to facilitate social inclusion through digital engagement

High firm performance

Improved marketing
New product and service development.
Business Visibility
Product reviews and suggestions
Recommendations and referrals



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Thank you and
Questions

