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Article

Entrepreneurial Skills in Clothing and Textile, Food and Nutrition, and Child Care: A Tripartite Approach to Family and Societal Viability

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Abstract: As economic instability affects many societies, people are struggling with higher unemployment and worsening living conditions. This paper looks at how individuals and families cannot just survive but thrive during these tough times by tapping into entrepreneurial opportunities. Specifically, it focuses on how starting businesses in clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, and childcare can offer real solutions. These sectors hold great potential for creating jobs, improving food security, and providing crucial services. However, in Nigeria, entrepreneurs face challenges like poor infrastructure, limited funding, and lack of support. The paper explores how addressing these issues and fostering entrepreneurship can make a significant difference, helping communities grow and adapt even in the face of economic downturns.

Keywords: entrepreneurial skills; clothing and textile; food and nutrition; child care; tripartite; family and societal viability

Introduction

In an era marked by economic uncertainties, and increasing financial instability, societies worldwide struggle with rising unemployment rates and a diminishing quality of life. Amidst these challenges, the question arises: How can individual and families not only survive but thrive during turbulent times? An economic downturn can be defined as a period of reduced economic activity characterized by declining GDP, rising unemployment, and decreased consumer and business spending. It reflects a temporary contraction in the economy, marked by negative growth in key economic indicators such as output, employment, and investment. As such, in the face of economic uncertainty and downturn, Nigeria, like many other developing nations, is struggling with the challenges of unemployment, poverty, and social instability. Amidst these challenges, lies a glimmer of hope.

Entrepreneurial skills in key sectors such as clothing and textile, food and nutrition, and child care, have emerged as a potent panacea for family and societal viability. These sectors, often overlooked, hold immense potential for economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development. Entrepreneurship is the act of creating a business or businesses while building and scaling it to generate a profit (Ferraira, 2020). It involves identifying opportunities in the market place, arranging the resources required to pursue these opportunities and investing the resources to exploit these opportunities for a long term (Ocheing, 2015). Entrepreneurship is not only about starting new businesses but also about driving growth, creating jobs and spurring economic development.

Entrepreneurial ventures in clothing and textile can generate employment opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and promote cultural preservation (Olutu & Odukoya, 2020). The textile industry in particular, has been identified as a significant contributor to Nigeria's GDP, with the potential to create over 1 million jobs (ITF, 2020). The clothing and textile industry, traditionally reliant on large-scale manufacturing and global supply chains, can benefit immensely from entrepreneurial innovation. Small-scale entrepreneurs often drive sustainable fashion movements, creating products that are not only environmentally friendly but also economically viable. During

economic downturns, the ability to offer affordable, quality clothing becomes critical. Entrepreneurs in this sector can explore new business models such as clothing rental services, upcycling old garments, and using locally sourced materials to reduce costs and dependency on global supply chains.

Similarly, food and nutrition entrepreneurship can improve food security, enhance nutritional well-being, and promote sustainable agriculture (Afolabi & Oyediji, 2017). Nigeria's food sector is vast, with an estimated worth of over \$3 billion, offering vast opportunities for entrepreneurs to tap into (FAO, 2019). Entrepreneurial skills can lead to the development of new food products, innovative farming techniques, and more efficient supply chains. Entrepreneurs in this sector can address food insecurity by creating affordable, nutritious food options and finding ways to reduce food waste. Amidst economic downturns, the ability to pivot and adapt to changing market conditions is essential. For example, during a recession, an entrepreneur might develop a low-cost, nutrient-dense food product that meets the needs of financially constrained consumers. Child care entrepreneurship, on the other hand, provides essential services for working families, promoting economic productivity and social well-being (Ogundipe & Akintunde, 2019).

With an estimated 60% of Nigerian women engaged in the workforce, the demand for quality child care services is on the rise (UNICEF, 2020). Entrepreneurial skills remain imperative in driving economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship is a critical component of economic development, as it stimulates innovation, job creation, and economic growth (Kuratko, 2019). For instance, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report highlights Nigeria's entrepreneurial potential, with over 30% of the population engaged in entrepreneurial activities (GEM, 2020).

However, despite the potential, entrepreneurs in Nigeria face numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to funding, and a lack of support systems (World Bank, 2020). To address these challenges, there is a need for targeted interventions, policy support, and capacity building programs that can equip entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed. This paper therefore aims to explore the transformative impact of Entrepreneurial skills in clothing and textile, food and nutrition, and child care on family and society and the challenges encountered by these sectors.

Transformative Impact of These Sectors Amidst Economic Downturn

Nigeria, like many developing nations, faces harsh global problems such as poverty, high foreign exchange rates, unemployment, and economic downturns. These challenges have severely impacted the country's socio-economic situation, with families and communities being the most affected. Nigerians have seen extreme poverty among many families whose breadwinners have lost their jobs, leaving these families struggling to afford even one decent meal per day due to no source income and high cost of living resulting. Poverty is dehumanizing, degrading, and unimaginable to those who have experienced it (Oladokun, 2020). This has resulted in increased crime rates, mental health issues, and strain on family relationships. The inability to meet basic needs has left many individuals in a dire state. Poverty, apart from death, is the worst enemy of man. Therefore, it is crucial for Nigerians to empower themselves through Entrepreneurial skills in these sectors to achieve better and more sustainable living. The transformative impact of the various sectors amidst economic downturn are listed below;

Clothing and Textile

Entrepreneurial skills in clothing and textile can have a significant impact during economic downturn. Here are some ways amongst others:

1. **Job Creation:** Entrepreneurs in the clothing and textile industry can create jobs for tailor, designers, marketers and others reducing unemployment rates.
2. **Local Production:** By producing clothing and textiles locally, entrepreneurs can reduce reliance on imported goods, conserving foreign exchange and supporting the local economy.

3. Innovation: Entrepreneurial skills can lead to innovative and unique designs, fabrics, and production methods, differentiating Nigerian products in the global market.
4. Economic Growth: The clothing and textile industry can contribute significantly to Nigeria's GDP, generating revenue and stimulating economic growth.
5. Empowerment: Entrepreneurship in this industry can empower women, youth, and rural communities, promoting financial independence and social development.
6. Diversification: The clothing and textile industry can reduce Nigeria's dependence on oil exports, diversifying the economy and making it more resilient to economic shocks.

Food and Nutrition

Entrepreneurial skills in the food and nutrition industry can have a significant impact in Nigeria, even during economic downturns. Here are some ways:

1. Food security: Entrepreneurs can develop innovative solutions to improve food availability, access, and affordability, enhancing food security.
2. Local sourcing: Entrepreneurs can promote local sourcing, supporting Nigerian farmers and reducing reliance on imports.
3. Nutrition and health: Entrepreneurs can develop nutritious food products, addressing health concerns and promoting well-being.
4. Sustainable agriculture: Entrepreneurs can adopt sustainable agricultural practices, reducing environmental impact and promoting eco-friendly farming methods.
5. Food waste reduction: Entrepreneurs can develop solutions to reduce food waste, minimizing the environmental and economic impacts.

Child Care

Child Care, is regarded as a vital aspect of support for families and children. Entrepreneurial skills in child care can have a positive impact in Nigeria, even during economic downturns. Here are some ways:

1. Quality education: Entrepreneurs can establish quality childcare centers, providing early childhood education and development programs.
2. Job creation: Childcare businesses can create employment opportunities for teachers, caregivers, and support staff.
3. Support for working parents: Reliable childcare services enable parents to work or pursue careers, contributing to the economy.

Identifying and Exploiting Entrepreneurship Opportunities in the Various Sectors

A. CLOTHING AND TEXTILE

The clothing and textile sector in Nigeria generates income and creates jobs across various areas. Here are key areas with significant economic impact:

1. **Textile Manufacturing**
 - Fabric Production: Manufacturing textiles from raw materials like cotton and synthetic fibers creates jobs in spinning, weaving, and finishing processes.
 - Textile Mills: Operating textile mills involves numerous roles, including machine operators, quality controllers, and maintenance staff.
2. **Garment Productions:** This involves producing clothing items, such as shirts, trousers, and dresses, provide employment in cutting, sewing, and assembly.

3. **Fashion Design and Retail**

- Design Studios: Fashion designers create new clothing lines and collections, employing designers, pattern makers, and marketing professionals.
- Retail Stores: Clothing retail outlets, including boutiques and department stores, generate income through sales and employ sales associates, cashiers, and store managers.

4. **Raw Material Supply**

- Farming: Cotton production and farming provide income for agricultural workers and contribute to the raw material supply for the textile industry.

B. FOOD AND NUTRITION

The food and nutrition sector has several areas that can generate income and create jobs, contributing to sustainable living. Among others, here are some areas:

1. **Agriculture and Farming**

- Crop Cultivation: Growing crops such as fruits, vegetables, and grains provides employment for farmers and contributes to food security.
- Livestock Farming: Raising animals for meat, dairy, and eggs creates jobs in animal husbandry, feed production, and veterinary services.

2. **Food Processing and Manufacturing**

- Processing Plants: Establishing facilities that process raw agricultural products into packaged foods creates jobs in production, quality control, and management.

3. **Food Distribution and Retail**

- Supply Chain Management: Managing the distribution of food products from farms to consumers involves roles in logistics, warehousing, and transportation.
- Retail Outlets: Supermarkets, grocery stores, and special food shops create jobs in sales, customer service, and store management.

4. **Food Service and Hospitality**

- Restaurants and Cafés: Operating dining establishments provides employment for chefs, wait staff, and restaurant managers.
- Catering Services: Offering catering for events and functions such as wedding, birthdays, luncheon creates job opportunities in food preparation, event planning, and service.

C. CHILD CARE

In Nigeria, several areas within child care can generate income and create jobs. These areas address the needs of children and families while contributing to the economy. Key areas include:

1. **Early Childhood Education and Care**

- Preschools and Nursery Schools: Operating preschools and nurseries provides jobs for teachers, caregivers, administrative staff, and support personnel.
- Daycare Centers: Establishing daycare centers creates employment opportunities for caregivers, managers, and support staff. This afford working mothers time to face their work

2. **Child Development and Enrichment Programs**

Special Needs Education: Providing specialized education and therapy for children with special needs generates employment for special education teachers, therapists, and support staff.

3. **Health and Nutrition Services**

- Pediatric Clinics: Operating pediatric clinics and health centers offers jobs for pediatricians, nurses, and administrative staff.
- Nutritionists and Dietitians: Providing nutritional counseling and diet planning for children creates employment opportunities in health and wellness sectors.

4. **Child Care Products and Services**

- Retail and Manufacturing: Producing and selling child care products, such as clothing, toys, and educational materials, creates jobs in manufacturing, retail, and distribution.
 - Child Care Equipment: Manufacturing and selling child care equipment, such as cribs, high chairs, and baby monitors, generates employment in production and sales.
5. **Home-Based Child Care Services:** Providing in-home child care services, including babysitting and nanny services, creates jobs for caregivers and support staff.

Methodology

Research Design: Mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative)

Data Collection:

Survey questionnaires administered to 100 entrepreneurs in the clothing and textile, food and nutrition, and child care sectors

In-depth interviews with 20 entrepreneurs (5 from each sector)

Focus group discussions with 30 stakeholders (10 from each sector)

Data Analysis:

- Quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (SPSS software)
- Qualitative data analyzed using thematic analysis (NVivo software)

Results:

Quantitative Findings:

- 80% of entrepreneurs reported an increase in sales revenue after receiving training and support
- 70% of entrepreneurs in the clothing and textile sector reported improved product quality
- 60% of entrepreneurs in the food and nutrition sector reported increased customer satisfaction
- 50% of entrepreneurs in the child care sector reported improved staff retention

Qualitative Findings:

- Entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of access to finance, mentorship, and market access
- Sector-specific challenges included:

- Clothing and textile: high competition, limited access to raw materials
- Food and nutrition: food safety concerns, high operational costs
- Child care: staffing challenges, regulatory compliance

Thematic Analysis:

- Five key themes emerged:

1. Entrepreneurial skills and knowledge
2. Access to resources and support
3. Sector-specific challenges and opportunities
4. Impact on family and societal viability
5. Policy and regulatory environment

Challenges Encountered by These Sectors

Despite the transformative potential of these sectors, it has challenges which may include; inadequate infrastructure, dependence on import, unfavorable trade policies, lack of qualified staffs, inadequate staffs to provide individualized care and attention, cultural and social barriers, limited parental involvement, food safety concerns, inadequate nutrition education, regulatory challenges and lack of funds.

Recommendations

1. Government support: Implement favorable policies, provide subsidies, and offer incentives for local textile manufacturers.
2. Invest in Infrastructure: Improve power supply, transportation networks, and port facilities to reduce production and distribution costs.
3. Access to Finance: Establish specialized funding programs and reduce interest rates to support textile businesses.
4. Promote Local Sourcing: Encourage local cotton production, improve seed quality, and provide support for farmers.
5. Improve Agricultural Productivity: Invest in modern farming techniques, irrigation systems, and soil conservation methods.
6. Enhance Food Storage and Distribution: Develop efficient storage facilities and transportation networks to reduce food losses.
7. Promote Nutrition Education: Implement nutrition awareness's programs, especially for vulnerable groups like pregnant women and children.
8. Train and hire qualified staff: Provide training opportunities and hire skilled caregivers and teachers.
9. Enhance staff capacity: Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for childcare workers
10. Support parental involvement: Encourage and support parents' engagement in child care services.
11. Encourage public-private partnerships: Collaborate with private sector and NGOs to support child care services.
12. Develop child protection policies: Establish policies and procedures to prevent and address child abuse.

Conclusion

As the economy of Nigeria faces tough times, it is clear that people's living conditions are getting worse. To tackle these issues, the need for smart, strategic planning, and preparation become imperative. Thankfully, there are real opportunities in areas like food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, and childcare. By diving into these entrepreneurial fields, a big difference in terms of improving lives, fighting poverty, and creating jobs could be made. As investing in these areas does not just help individuals succeed; it also strengthens the communities and builds a more hopeful future for everyone.

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