#### Effect of Entrepreneurship on Economic Independence of Women in Ondo State, Nigeria

**Abstract**

*This study examines the effect of entrepreneurship on the economic independence of women in Ondo State, Nigeria, within the context of the country's ongoing inflationary economy. While entrepreneurship is globally acknowledged as a catalyst for women’s empowerment and financial autonomy, its impact under inflation-induced economic pressures remains understudied, particularly at the sub-national level. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 386 women entrepreneurs across Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo using stratified sampling and structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that most women in Ondo State prefer entrepreneurship over government employment due to its flexibility, higher income potential, and better work-life balance. Despite inflationary challenges, entrepreneurial activities significantly enhanced women's ability to support their households, accumulate savings, make investments, and increase their decision-making power within families. The study also found that limited access to finance, inadequate training, and socio-cultural barriers continue to constrain women’s full economic potential. Nonetheless, the positive link between entrepreneurship and financial independence underscores its importance as a tool for economic empowerment. The study recommends that targeted financial programs, flexible work policies, and business development support be expanded to strengthen women's entrepreneurial outcomes. These interventions are crucial to enhancing women's resilience and advancing inclusive economic growth in Ondo State.*

**Keywords**: Women Entrepreneurship, Economic Independence, Inflation, Ondo State, Financial Empowerment.

**Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a potent tool for achieving women’s economic empowerment and independence. However, the extent to which entrepreneurial activities have translated into genuine economic independence for women in Ondo State, Nigeria, especially amid the current inflationary economic challenges remains uncertain. Scholars (Nafiu, Ogbadu, & Yakubu, 2018; Sule, Abutu, & Nafiu, 2019) have long affirmed the transformative power of entrepreneurship in generating opportunities, economic freedom, and social mobility. Studies (Acs, Autio, & Szerb, 2020; Dangana, Nafiu, & Isienyi, 2023; Nafiu et al., 2018) assert that entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic development, innovation, and job creation, especially in developing countries where it provides a viable route out of poverty and enhances resilience. In Nigeria’s entrepreneurial landscape, women are active across sectors like agriculture, retail, and services. Nonetheless, many women in Ondo State face obstacles such as inflationary pressure, rising operational costs, and diminishing purchasing power, all of which hinder their path toward economic self-sufficiency.

Kabeer (2020) emphasized that economic independence is critical to women's empowerment, as it enables them to make autonomous choices, support their families, and contribute to community development. Despite increasing female participation in entrepreneurship, Oluboba, Ojo, and Oladipo (2021) noted that structural barriers such as limited access to finance, poor mentorship, socio-cultural biases, and market exclusion continue to undermine women’s efforts in Ondo State. Similarly, Adesanya and Adegboye (2022) observed that such constraints impede business growth and limit women's ability to achieve financial stability and independence. While a growing body of literature—including works by Adeyemi (2023), Nwosu and Eke (2022), Olayinka and Akinyele (2023), Ajayi and Ojo (2022), and others acknowledges these challenges, most studies offer a general overview without narrowing their focus to Ondo State or its inflation-specific conditions.

This study addresses the existing research gap by investigating the specific effects of entrepreneurial activities on women’s economic independence in Ondo State amid the inflationary economic environment. It raises two key research questions: (1) What are the major reasons discouraging entrepreneurial women in Ondo State from pursuing government employment? (2) What is the extent to which entrepreneurship influences the economic independence of these women? To explore these questions, two hypotheses were tested: Ho₁: The reasons discouraging women from seeking government jobs are insignificant. Ho₂: Entrepreneurial activities do not significantly affect women’s economic independence in Ondo State within the current inflationary economy.

**Conceptual Clarification**

**Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship has been conceptualized from multiple scholarly angles, with this study adopting perspectives that emphasize innovation, opportunity recognition, and socio-economic impact. Nwachukwu, Fadeyi, Paul, and Vu (2021) define entrepreneurship as identifying opportunities and mobilizing resources to achieve financial independence and contribute to community development despite structural challenges. Stevenson (2022) expands this by describing entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources currently controlled, highlighting an entrepreneur's proactive nature. Drucker (2021) emphasizes innovation as central to entrepreneurship, portraying entrepreneurs as agents who exploit societal and technological changes to foster economic progress. Schumpeter (2021) similarly views entrepreneurs as innovators who disrupt the status quo by introducing new products or processes that drive economic transformation. Fatoki (2022) consolidates these views by defining entrepreneurship as the act of innovating and taking calculated risks to create societal and personal value. In the context of this study, **entrepreneurship** refers to the process by which individuals, particularly women in Ondo State, initiate, develop, and manage business ventures. It involves identifying market opportunities, securing financial resources, and organizing efforts to produce goods or services to generate profit and achieve business growth.

**Economic independence**

Economic independence has been defined from national, sectoral, and individual perspectives. Afolabi et al. (2023) describe it as a nation's capacity to produce enough goods and services to meet its needs without excessive reliance on imports emphasizing economic self-sufficiency. Akerele (2021) defines it as the ability of a country to implement independent economic policies reflecting its national interests, free from external influence. The Nigerian Economic Society (NES, 2024) adds that economic independence lies in sectoral diversification, where agriculture, manufacturing, and services collectively drive GDP growth and reduce dependency on oil. At the individual level, institutions like the Fraser Institute (2023), United Nations Women (UNM, 2024), and Heritage Foundation (2024) define economic independence through characteristics such as autonomy, control over resources, freedom from economic coercion, sustainable income, access to opportunities, and legal/institutional support, particularly for gender equity. In the context of this study, economic independence refers to the ability of women entrepreneurs in Ondo State to consistently generate income and control resources sufficient to meet personal and household needs without dependence on external financial aid. It encapsulates self-reliance, economic freedom, and empowerment through sustainable income, access to opportunities, and equitable participation in the economic sphere.

**Theoretical Underpinning**

The main proponents of the social capital theory are Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1995). The key **assumptions are: (i)** Social capital refers to resources embedded within social networks, relationships, and trust that can be utilized for personal or collective benefit (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). (ii) Women entrepreneurs benefit from the networks they establish within their communities, which provide financial, informational, and emotional support (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). (iii) Access to social capital is critical for overcoming resource constraints and market entry barriers, particularly for women with limited access to formal financial systems (Adler & Kwon, 2002). However, critics argue that social capital theory often overlooks power dynamics within networks. Gender inequalities, for example, can restrict women’s access to influential networks, leaving them unable to benefit fully from social capital (Fine, 2010). Furthermore, the theory assumes equal utilization of networks, ignoring socio-cultural barriers that disproportionately affect women in patriarchal societies (Portes, 1998). **Despite the criticisms,** it can be argued that the **social capital theory** applies to this study for the following reasons: (i) **Alignment with contextual realities:** Women entrepreneurs in Ondo State often rely heavily on their networks and community ties to overcome challenges such as limited financial resources, lack of formal institutional support, and socio-cultural constraints. It emphasizes the value of these networks, trust, and reciprocal relationships in facilitating access to resources, markets, and information. (ii) **Addressing informal systems:** The business environment in Ondo State includes a significant informal sector. Social capital theory captures the dynamics of community support systems such as cooperative groups, savings societies, and informal mentorship networks, which are critical for entrepreneurial success in this context.

**Empirical Review**

The economic empowerment and independence of women have become pivotal themes in contemporary development discourse, with entrepreneurship widely recognized as a strategic avenue to achieve these objectives (Kabeer, 2020). In the Nigerian context, women’s participation in entrepreneurial ventures has been notably prominent across key sectors such as agriculture, retail trade, and informal services. This trend is largely driven by limited access to formal employment and the broader challenges of a struggling national economy (Ajayi & Ojo, 2022). However, while entrepreneurship has offered a route toward financial inclusion and self-reliance, its capacity to deliver lasting economic independence for women in Ondo State is increasingly challenged by the prevailing inflationary pressures. The high cost of goods, currency depreciation, and reduced consumer demand have compounded operational difficulties for women-owned enterprises (Adeyemi, 2023; Adesanya & Adegboye, 2022). Although entrepreneurship has the potential to stimulate innovation, reduce poverty, and build economic resilience (Acs, Autio, & Szerb, 2020), women’s ability to harness these benefits remains uneven. Specifically, women encounter numerous systemic barriers, including limited access to credit facilities, insufficient entrepreneurial education and training, inadequate mentorship structures, and entrenched socio-cultural norms that restrict their business autonomy (Dada, Nafiu, & Atokolo, 2021; Oluboba, Ojo, & Oladipo, 2021). The inflationary climate further exacerbates these challenges by undermining profitability, restricting market access, and impeding long-term planning and investment. As Kabeer (2020) points out, economic independence is not merely about income generation; it also entails decision-making power, household welfare enhancement, and active participation in community development. Despite a growing body of research on women’s entrepreneurship in Nigeria, many existing studies remain national in scope and fail to address localized experiences. For instance, while scholars such as Adeyemi (2023), Nwosu and Eke (2022), and Olayinka and Akinyele (2023) have explored the general impact of entrepreneurship on women, there is a notable lack of focused empirical analysis that examines the lived realities of women entrepreneurs in Ondo State under inflationary economic conditions. This gap is significant because regional disparities in infrastructure, socio-cultural norms, and market dynamics can mediate the outcomes of entrepreneurial ventures in meaningful ways.

To this end, this study contributes to the literature by providing a region-specific analysis of how entrepreneurial activities affect women’s economic independence in Ondo State amidst Nigeria’s inflationary economy. By narrowing the analytical lens to this unique regional and economic context, the research aims to generate deeper insights into the effectiveness of entrepreneurship as a tool for women’s empowerment and economic self-reliance.

**Methodology and Demographic Dataset**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to assess the impact of entrepreneurial activities on women's economic independence in Ondo State, Nigeria, within the context of inflation. The study focused on Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo, representing the three senatorial districts chosen for their active and diverse entrepreneurial environments. The target population comprised women engaged in various small-scale and medium-sized enterprises. A scientifically determined sample size of 400 was selected using Taro Yamane’s formula, with stratified sampling ensuring regional representation. Data collection was carried out using a self-developed questionnaire containing close-ended and a few open-ended items. Of the 400 questionnaires administered, 386 were successfully retrieved using a combination of drop-and-collect and follow-up techniques. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages) and inferential z-tests, supported by Excel and Python software for processing and interpretation.

### **Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 386)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| **Age** | 18–25 years | 54 | 13.99 |
|  | 26–35 years | 138 | 35.75 |
|  | 36–45 years | 163 | 42.23 |
|  | 46–55 years | 22 | 5.70 |
|  | 56 years and above | 9 | 2.33 |
| **Marital Status** | Single | 102 | 26.42 |
|  | Married | 270 | 69.95 |
|  | Divorced | 8 | 2.07 |
|  | Widowed | 6 | 1.55 |
| **Educational Level** | No formal education | 70 | 18.13 |
|  | Primary education | 5 | 1.30 |
|  | Secondary education | 201 | 52.07 |
|  | Tertiary education | 110 | 28.50 |
| **Employment Status** | Full-time entrepreneur | 132 | 34.20 |
|  | Part-time entrepreneur | 88 | 22.80 |
|  | Employed in another job | 64 | 16.58 |
|  | Unemployed | 102 | 26.42 |
| **Business Location** | Akure (Central) | 152 | 39.38 |
|  | Okitipupa (South) | 103 | 26.68 |
|  | Owo (North) | 131 | 33.94 |
| **Business Size** | Small | 201 | 52.07 |
|  | Medium | 114 | 29.53 |
|  | Large | 71 | 18.40 |
| **Business Sector** | Retail | 106 | 27.46 |
|  | Services | 102 | 26.42 |
|  | Manufacturing | 60 | 15.54 |
|  | Agriculture | 80 | 20.73 |
|  | Technology | 48 | 12.44 |
| **Years of Experience** | Less than 1 year | 50 | 12.95 |
|  | 1–3 years | 74 | 19.17 |
|  | 4–6 years | 62 | 16.06 |
|  | 7–10 years | 102 | 26.42 |
|  | More than 10 years | 108 | 27.98 |

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The demographic data in Table I reveal that the majority of women entrepreneurs who participated in this study across Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo are within the productive age range of 26–45 years (77.98%), indicating an active economic demographic. Most respondents are married (69.95%), suggesting family responsibility as a possible driver of economic engagement. Regarding education, more than 80% of participants had at least secondary education, implying a relatively educated population with the potential to make informed entrepreneurial decisions. In terms of employment status, 34.2% of respondents identified as full-time entrepreneurs, while another 22.8% were part-timers, showing that entrepreneurship is a significant source of livelihood for many women in the state. Business location distribution was relatively balanced across the three senatorial districts, though Akure had the highest representation (39.4%), likely due to its status as the state capital and economic hub. More than half of the respondents (52.1%) operate small-scale businesses, underscoring the informal and micro-enterprise nature of women-led ventures in the region. Sectoral analysis shows a predominance of retail (27.46%) and services (26.42%), followed by agriculture (20.73%), reflecting the common entrepreneurial activities in the area.

**Results and Interpretation**

The results of the analysis of the data gathered about research question two - what are the effects of entrepreneurial activities on the economic independence of women in Ondo State within the present inflationary economy of Nigeria are presented in tables and interpreted.

### **Table II: Reasons that Discouraged Women from Seeking Government Jobs in Ondo State (N = 386)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| Government job recruitment processes are cumbersome | 104 (26.97%) | 128 (33.22%) | 12 (3.11%) | 82 (21.24%) | 70 (18.15%) |
| Limited opportunities for career growth in government jobs | 85 (22.02%) | 202 (52.33%) | 14 (3.63%) | 63 (16.32%) | 22 (5.70%) |
| Government work environment is rigid and inflexible | 25 (6.48%) | 34 (8.82%) | 9 (2.34%) | 286 (74.26%) | 52 (13.47%) |
| Government jobs offer lower financial incentives than entrepreneurship | 64 (16.58%) | 282 (73.03%) | 4 (1.04%) | 24 (6.22%) | 22 (5.71%) |
| I prefer the independence and control over work entrepreneurship provides | 10 (2.59%) | 24 (6.22%) | 8 (2.08%) | 202 (52.36%) | 142 (36.75%) |
| My passion and interest lie in entrepreneurial ventures | 29 (7.52%) | 21 (5.44%) | 6 (1.55%) | 260 (67.37%) | 80 (20.77%) |
| Government jobs are perceived to be inefficient and lacking innovation | 60 (15.56%) | 82 (21.23%) | 10 (2.59%) | 172 (44.50%) | 62 (16.06%) |
| Entrepreneurship offers better work-life balance | 41 (10.62%) | 79 (20.54%) | 4 (1.04%) | 171 (44.25%) | 101 (26.55%) |
| I prefer entrepreneurial risks over government job security | 35 (9.07%) | 50 (12.95%) | 15 (3.88%) | 230 (59.58%) | 56 (14.50%) |
| Government jobs lack recognition and satisfaction compared to business | 18 (4.66%) | 101 (26.18%) | 14 (3.63%) | 221 (57.23%) | 32 (8.29%) |

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table II presents data on the reasons why entrepreneurial women in Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo, Ondo State, may be discouraged from seeking government employment. The responses indicate that systemic or bureaucratic concerns are less influential than factors related to autonomy and personal motivation. For instance, 60.19% of the respondents (26.97% strongly disagreed and 33.22% disagreed) did not consider the recruitment process in government jobs as cumbersome, while 39.39% (21.24% agreed and 18.15% strongly agreed) saw it as discouraging. Similarly, 74.35% of the respondents (22.02% strongly disagreed and 52.33% disagreed) rejected the idea that limited opportunities for career growth deterred them from government jobs, suggesting that career advancement in the public sector was not a significant concern for most participants. In contrast, the nature of the government work environment was perceived as a major deterrent. A large proportion, 87.73%, agreed (74.26%) or strongly agreed (13.47%) that the rigidity and inflexibility of public sector work discouraged them. This was echoed in their preference for autonomy, as 89.11% of respondents (52.36% agreed and 36.75% strongly agreed) preferred the independence and control that entrepreneurship provides. Passion was another prominent factor, with 88.14% (67.37% agreed and 20.77% strongly agreed) expressing that their interest lies in entrepreneurial ventures rather than government roles. Perceptions about innovation and work satisfaction also played a role. About 60.56% of respondents (44.50% agreed and 16.06% strongly agreed) viewed government jobs as inefficient and lacking innovation. Furthermore, 70.8% (44.25% agreed and 26.55% strongly agreed) believed entrepreneurship offers a better work-life balance than government employment. A strong entrepreneurial orientation was also evident in the 74.08% of women (59.58% agreed and 14.50% strongly agreed) who preferred the risks associated with entrepreneurship over the perceived job security of government jobs. In addition, 65.52% (57.23% agreed and 8.29% strongly agreed) of the respondents reported that entrepreneurship provides a greater sense of recognition and satisfaction compared to government work.

### **Table III: Effects of Entrepreneurial Activities on Women’s Economic Independence in Ondo State (N = 386)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Extent entrepreneurial activity improved your financial status | Very significantly | 35 | 9.1 |
|  | Significantly | 201 | 52.1 |
|  | Moderately | 103 | 26.7 |
|  | Slightly | 47 | 12.2 |
|  | Not at all | 0 | 0.0 |
| Change in ability to support household financially since starting business | Greatly improved | 74 | 19.2 |
|  | Improved | 312 | 80.8 |
|  | No change | 0 | 0.0 |
|  | Decreased | 0 | 0.0 |
| Contribution of entrepreneurial income to saving ability | Very significantly | 101 | 26.2 |
|  | Significantly | 124 | 32.1 |
|  | Moderately | 141 | 36.5 |
|  | Slightly | 20 | 5.2 |
|  | Not at all | 0 | 0.0 |
| Has entrepreneurial activity enabled investment in property, education, or long-term assets? | Yes | 277 | 71.8 |
|  | No | 109 | 28.2 |
| Type of investment made | Property | 274 | 71.0 |
|  | Education | 90 | 23.3 |
|  | Cryptocurrency | 22 | 5.7 |
| Effect on decision-making power within the family | Significantly increased | 103 | 26.7 |
|  | Increased | 202 | 52.3 |
|  | No change | 81 | 21.0 |
|  | Decreased | 0 | 0.0 |
| Do you feel more economically independent since starting your business? | Yes | 315 | 81.6 |
|  | No | 0 | 0.0 |
|  | Not sure | 71 | 18.4 |

**Source:** Field Survey (2024)

Table III provides a comprehensive summary of the perceived effects of entrepreneurial activities on the economic independence of women in Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo, Ondo State. The data reveals that 87.9% of the respondents (52.1% significantly and 26.7% moderately) affirmed that entrepreneurship improved their financial status, while 9.1% stated it did so very significantly. Only 12.2% indicated a slight improvement, and none reported no improvement at all. Similarly, when asked about changes in their ability to support their households financially, 100% of the women reported positive outcomes: 80.8% said it improved, and 19.2% said it greatly improved. This indicates that entrepreneurial activities play a vital role in sustaining family welfare, especially amid inflationary challenges in Nigeria. In terms of savings, 94.8% of the women acknowledged that income from entrepreneurship had contributed to their saving capacity, with 26.2% and 32.1% indicating very significant and significant contributions, respectively. A further 36.5% observed a moderate contribution, while only 5.2% perceived the contribution as slight, and none reported no contribution. This reinforces the role of entrepreneurship in not only providing daily sustenance but also enabling financial security and long-term planning. Regarding investment behavior, 71.8% of respondents stated that their entrepreneurial earnings had enabled them to invest in long-term assets such as property or education, while 28.2% had not been able to make such investments. Among those who invested, 71.0% prioritized property, 23.3% invested in education, and a smaller proportion, 5.7%, ventured into cryptocurrency. These findings suggest a preference for tangible, secure investments among the majority, with some interest in digital assets. The influence of entrepreneurship on social dynamics within families was also evident. A total of 79% of respondents reported increased (52.3%) or significantly increased (26.7%) decision-making power within their families. Although 21.0% indicated no change, no respondent reported a decrease, highlighting the empowering effect of economic independence on women’s voices in household affairs. Additionally, 81.6% of respondents affirmed that they feel more economically independent since starting their business, while 18.4% were unsure. Notably, none of the participants felt less economically independent. This widespread affirmation of enhanced independence confirms the transformative impact of entrepreneurship on women’s economic status and agency.

### **Recall Hypothesis 1**

**Ho1: The** reasons that discouraged entrepreneurial women from seeking government job in Ondo State in Nigeria in the first place are insignificant.

**Table IV: Z-Test Results of Ho1**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Factor | Proportion (p) | Z-test Score | P-Value | Remarks |
| Government job recruitment processes are cumbersome | 0.394 | -4.17 | 0.000031 | Significant |
| Limited opportunities for career growth in government jobs | 0.220 | -11.00 | 0.000000 | Significant |
| The work environment in government jobs is too rigid and inflexible | 0.876 | 14.77 | 0.000000 | Significant |
| Government jobs offer lower financial incentives compared to entrepreneurship | 0.119 | -14.97 | 0.000000 | Significant |
| Prefer the independence and control over work that entrepreneurship provides | 0.658 | 6.21 | 0.0000005 | Significant |
| Passion and interest lie in entrepreneurial ventures, not in government roles | 0.880 | 14.93 | 0.000000 | Significant |
| Government jobs are perceived to be inefficient and lacking in innovation | 0.606 | 4.17 | 0.000031 | Significant |
| Entrepreneurship offers better work-life balance compared to government jobs | 0.705 | 8.06 | 0.000000 | Significant |
| Prefer the risks associated with entrepreneurship over perceived job security | 0.741 | 9.47 | 0.000000 | Significant |
| Government jobs do not provide the same level of recognition and satisfaction | 0.655 | 6.09 | 0.0000001 | Significant |
| Significance level of 0.05 |  |  |  |  |

Source: Python Analysis Result (2024).

Based on the above results in Table IV, the following interpretation, decision and conclusion can be drawn: The z-test results show that all factors have z-scores with p-values far below the significance level of 0.05. This means that the proportions of agreement with each factor are significantly different from the hypothetical proportion of 50%. Since the p-values for all reasons are less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (Ho1). The reasons that discouraged entrepreneurial women from seeking government jobs in Ondo State are significant. Each of these factors has a statistically significant impact, contributing to the preference for entrepreneurship over government employment.

### **Recall Hypothesis 2**

**Ho2: Entrepreneurship does not have a significant effect on the economic independence of women in Ondo State, within the present inflationary economy in Nigeria.**

**Table V: Z-Test Results of Ho2**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Proportion (p)** | **Z-test Score** | **P-Value** | **Remarks** |
| Very significantly improved financial status | 0.091 | -16.07 | 0.0 | Significant |
| Greatly improved ability to support household financially | 0.192 | -12.10 | 0.0 | Significant |
| Entrepreneurial income very significantly contributed to the ability to save money | 0.262 | -9.35 | 0.0 | Significant |
| Entrepreneurial activity enabled investment in property, education, or other long-term assets | 0.718 | 8.57 | 0.0 | Significant |
| Property is the type of investment made through entrepreneurship | 0.710 | 8.25 | 2.2 | Significant |
| Entrepreneurial activity significantly increases decision-making power within the family | 0.267 | -9.16 | 0.0 | Significant |
| Feeling more economically independent since starting a business | 0.816 | 12.42 | 0.0 | Significant |
| Significance level of 0.05 |  |  |  |  |

Source: Python Analysis Result (2024)

Based on the above results in Table V, the following interpretation, decision, and conclusion can be drawn: The z-test results show that all factors have z-scores with p-values far below the significance level of 0.05. This means that the proportions of positive effects reported by women entrepreneurs are significantly different from the hypothetical proportion of 50%. Since the p-values for all factors are less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (Ho2). Entrepreneurship has a significant effect on the economic independence of women in Ondo State, within the present inflationary economy in Nigeria. The significant positive effects observed across various dimensions of financial status, investment, and decision-making power demonstrate the crucial role of entrepreneurship in enhancing economic independence for women in the region. ​

**Discussion**

In respect of the study finding on research question one about factors that discouraged entrepreneurial women from seeking government jobs, it is obvious that women entrepreneurs across the study locations, Akure, Okitipupa and Owo in Ondo State are primarily driven by the desire for economic independence and the flexibility that entrepreneurship offers, which discourages them from seeking government jobs. This agree with the work of Ogundipe (2019), who identified autonomy, the ability to balance work and family responsibilities, and the potential for higher income as key motivators for women to pursue entrepreneurship rather than traditional employment. In contrast to government jobs, which may offer stability but limited growth opportunities, entrepreneurship provides these women with the chance to control their own economic destinies. This aligns with scholarly perspectives that emphasize the empowerment potential of entrepreneurship for women (Eze & Chukwuemeka, 2020). In view of the study finding on research question two about the extent of the effects of entrepreneurial activities on the economic independence of women across Akure, Okitipupa and Owo in Ondo State, it becomes glaring that entrepreneurial activities have a significant positive impact on the economic independence of women, despite the challenges posed by the current inflationary economy. The study revealed that the majority of women entrepreneurs are optimistic about achieving economic independence through their businesses. This finding supports the research by Adebayo and Akinyele (2018), who found that entrepreneurship is a critical pathway for women to attain financial autonomy and improve their socio-economic status. However, the impact of inflation, which strains profitability and growth, highlights the resilience of these women entrepreneurs, as discussed by Okafor (2017), who emphasized the adaptability of women entrepreneurs in adverse economic conditions. Thus, while the findings align with existing research on the positive role of entrepreneurship, they also underline the need for supportive economic policies.

### **Conclusion**

The study demonstrates that women in Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo prefer entrepreneurship over government employment due to its flexibility, autonomy, and capacity to support work-life balance. Additionally, entrepreneurial activities have proven to be a strong driver of women’s economic independence, enabling financial improvement, household support, savings, investment, and increased decision-making power. Together, these findings affirm that entrepreneurship is a vital pathway for women's economic empowerment in Ondo State, especially in the face of inflationary pressures and structural limitations in public sector employment.

### **Recommendations**

### Based on the findings, for entrepreneurship to further foster economic independence among women in Ondo State Nigeria, the following actionable recommendations are offered in Table VI:

Table VI: Actionable recommendations for ease of policy guide and implementation purposes

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Finding** | **Recommendation** | **Action** | **Responsible Stakeholders** |
| **Women’s Preference for Entrepreneurship Over Government Jobs** | Establish flexible work initiatives. | Pilot flexible work programs by mid-2025, including part-time roles and remote work opportunities tailored to women. | Ondo State Civil Service Commission, Local Government Authorities |
| Promote entrepreneurship advocacy and support. | Conduct community workshops and awareness campaigns focusing on balancing entrepreneurship with family responsibilities. | NGOs, Women’s development groups in Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo |
| **Contribution of Entrepreneurship to Women’s Economic Independence** | Scale up financial independence programs. | Establish micro-grant schemes for women entrepreneurs to support startups and expand existing businesses. | Ondo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Private Sector Donors |
| Expand access to business development services. | Organize free monthly training sessions on business planning, marketing, and financial management. | Trade associations, Entrepreneurship hubs |

Implementing the recommendations will significantly enhance women’s economic participation and empowerment in Ondo State. Flexible work initiatives in the public sector would attract more women by accommodating family responsibilities, reducing the gender gap in government employment. Advocacy and community workshops will raise awareness and strengthen women’s entrepreneurial engagement. Scaling up micro-grant programs would address financial barriers, enabling more women to start and grow their businesses. Furthermore, regular business training sessions will improve entrepreneurial skills, leading to sustainable ventures. Collectively, these actions will promote economic independence, increase household income, and foster inclusive development, especially in Akure, Okitipupa, and Owo communities.

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