
**Assessment of Women Employment in the Informal Sector: A Study of Crushed Rock
Company Limited Akamkpa, Cross River State, Nigeria**

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess women employment in the informal sector. Ex-post facto research design was adopted. The study was conducted in Crushed Rock Company Limited Akamkpa, Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised social scientists and executives of some informal Companies. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 140 respondents which constituted the sample size. The Main Instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Women Employment in the Informal Sector Questionnaire (WEISQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study found and concluded that there is significant effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy. It was therefore recommended that women should improve themselves like the male counterparts in order to be able to be fixed into the company's employment schedule; this will reduce the rigorous of training new employees before being fit to be employed.

KEYWORDS: Women Employment, Marginalization, Informal Sector, Crushed Rock Company Limited.

Introduction

Informal sector or informal economy encompasses all jobs that are not recognized as normal income sources that could generate tax to government. It is part of a country's economy that is not known to produce income tax. The term is sometimes used to refer to illegal activity that people engage themselves with for the purpose of earning income. Informal sector could also be interpreted to include legal activities such as jobs that are performed in exchange for something other than money. Bromley (2009) said informal sector is activity performed by an individual to earn wages but does not declare the earnings for the purposes of tax payment/evasion. These according to him, include those who push

drugs, illegal petroleum refineries, and petty traders on the road side and peasant farmers. Informal economy, shadow or underground economy as it referred to by some scholars has helped to boost the economy of many countries in the world.

Crushed Rock Company, Akamkpa in Cross River State Nigeria, for instance, though the company is owned by an individual, the employments therein does not favour women. The reason is that most of the work seems to be masculine incline. The women are now push to be packing gravels, either on the road side leading to the company premises or hawking and hanging at the gate for any menial work. The numbers of women who are lucky to work in the company are significantly very small. They are assigned cleaning work, receptionist or messenger's duties. These disparities in employment work schedule seem to make women and youths to be very vulnerable to crime. The reason women are most affected is because of their children and others they are catering for, especially those single mothers, who carry the burden of child upbringing alone.

Statement of the Problem

It is common knowledge that many Nigerian women and girls are enslaved due to patriarchal mentality. In Crushed Rock Company, Akamkpa in Cross River State, Nigeria, the story is not different from what it ought to be. Out of 200 workers in the company, it is only 10 that are women. Majority of the women are allowed to work as casual workers, in and outside the company premises where they could be sent packing at will. The truck drivers molest women at random because she has no job security for her protection. Women who are lucky to work in the company do not observe break period as their male counterpart. They also work more than any other category of workers because while others work in shift, the women work from morning to evening. Even those women that have their names on the payroll, their take-home-pay are not the same with their male counterpart because over time and other allowances that supposed to increase their salary are not paid to women but only paid to men on different duties and shift done. Though women are not allowed to perform or engage in such areas like machineries in order for their pay to be increased, women still insist that, given the opportunity, they can perform well. The reason is that men are believed to be stronger than women. In the Crushed Rock, the director sees women as being weak and may not be able to do what men could do. This is because the Crushed rock is a patriarchal company. The effect of the Rock crushed is on everybody in the community. The noise, the dust inhaled, the truck and human activities are on everybody. But one wonders why the women employment is a difficult task to the company? This study is therefore, an exposé to assess women employment in the informal sector.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was to assess women employment in the informal sector in the Crushed Rock Company, Akamkpa. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the reasons why women are not employed in the Crushed Rock Company.
2. To assess the challenges faced by women in the course of not being employed.
3. To determine the effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the reasons women are not employed in the Crushed Rock Company?
2. What are the challenges faced by the women in the course of not being employed?
3. What are the effects of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy.

Significance of the Study

For any research work to be carried out, there must be reasons for the research. Research always entails improvement, up-grading and also bringing out new things that may be added to the existing one. On this note therefore, the study will be very beneficial to both the company owners, workers and any person that may require any assistance from the company. It will help women to prepare themselves for any eventuality as regards the employment and any other business in the company. It will help the company relate well with the host-communities and the youths of the community. It will help company stakeholders to know the company objectives and what its stand for. Government through this study will help the company by reducing the tax burden of the company to enable the company open employment opportunities for people. Future researchers will find this work very helpful to enable them break even, research wise.

Literature Review

Informal Sector

Informal sector, according to Dube (2018) in his political economy, alleged that the term was introduced by Reith Hart in 1973. The term came in a broader perspective in the academic literature after the visit of an International Labour Organization (ILO) on employment mission to Kenya in 1972. The ILO report defined “informal” as a way of doing things, which characterized by ease of entry and exit. The report went further to stress the relevance on indigenous resources, family ownership, small scale operation, labour intensive and adaptive technology on skill acquisition outside the formal sector. ILO (2002) report defined the term “informal sector” as a range of economic units in urban areas which are largely owned and operated by single individuals with little capital and labour, produce and distribute goods and services with a view to generate income and employment to the persons concerned.

The ILO’s reports captured the real situation in the Crushed Rock Company in Akamkpa, Cross River State, Nigeria. The employment opportunities are given to concerned people. The econometric findings showed that the participant in the informal sector in the service industries are predominantly male, older individuals living in urban areas (Carbonnier & Morel, 2015; and Mamayanti, Scott & Ruhaman, 2018). Crushed Rock as a German Company, select their workers especially from those that were working in the former German company- Strabag. Any other persons are alien to them; talk less of women whom they see as weak that cannot handle any tools of the company.

Though informal sector could also be interpreted to include legal activities (Carbonniel and Morel, 2015) such as that of Crushed Rock Company, which their operations are still

classified as formal. Though they do not have employment security, workplace safety or social security. The workers there, apart from reduction in their salary in terms of tax of the company, they evade tax payment. The taxes from their salaries have not been remitted to government regularly. The workers only enjoy the benefits of the ID cards given to them by the company to avoid molestation by revenue officials on the road. They also are being covered by the company name to evade tax by the state government. The company claims that they are partnering the government for employment and other social responsibilities within their operational communities or area (Dube, 2018). The evasion of labour regulation, made workers in the company not to engage the company in any labour disagreement, because they are not bound by the labour law and regulations.

Reasons why Women are not Employed in the Informal Sector

National Sample Survey Organization NSSO (2013) and Self Employed women Association (SEWA, 2013) were of the view that women marginalization in the place of work were rooted from the patriarchy- system where men were put ahead of women. Women, according to women association believe that they are not weaker sex as claimed by men but are complementary sex to one another (Karabchuk and Zabirova 2018).

Destremau (2007) attributes women marginalization to *discrimination* in which multinational corporations relocate in search of cheaper labour. Women being where discrimination against them is rife tend to be stucked in continuing poverty and social and economic deprivation, a situation that is passed on from one generation to another. Women at younger ages were discriminated against, as families give preference to boys not only in education but also in other areas, even to the extent of the sharing of food at home. This discrimination at early stages of the life cycle can have a cumulative effect in the later stages of life. The world of work is sex-disaggregated regardless of the level of development of a society, while the magnitude of gender gaps and differences in the world of work at the country level varies depending on how the society ascribes gender roles to girls, women, boys and men. It also depends on the extent to which such socially constructed beliefs affect both the quantity and quality of women's and men's economic participation. It also affects the distribution of unpaid care givers and household work. All societies, in this regard, ascribe social roles to people through *social norms* that are passed on from one generation to another (Kabeer, 2008). Such social norms are also often enforced by formal written norms. Gender roles could thus evolve, and have evolved, in various societies over time. The overall trends in the global world of work show however that, gender gaps in the labour market persist, and changes in social norms dictating the roles of women and men which makes them to be slow at best, if not static in many countries.

The society may also take advantage of women's' *lack of pre-training on the skills required* for employment in the company, but forget that, there could be a chance where women are trained internally after employment to acquire the needed skills in the company. In our contemporary society, women are not given the same access to technical education as their male counterparts, with believe that women are weak but given in marriage at young age even before reaching puberty. Because they have early become young women, and are less educated and skilled like their male counterparts, they have less access to economic and labour market opportunities (Wodon, et al., 2017).

Williams et al (2018) said women unemployment in the informal sector may be as a result of *health challenges and safety risk* which involves dangerous working condition of the company, including companies that are so susceptible to health hazard depending on what

they do. They were of the view that women should be tested to ensure that they would be able to face any circumstances or challenges arising from the place of work, before being employed. Many companies in Nigeria do not have a regulated safety standard to less the risk faced in the place of work. Therefore, women are exempted from such works.

The Challenges Faced by Women in the Course of not Being Employed

The challenges women face every day due to not being employed are overwhelming such as:

Engagement in Crime: Chigunta (2010) pointed out that, due to unemployment opportunities, unemployed young women may be forced to engage in an unpleasant work and other livelihood not accepted by the society. These include commercial sex work which may exposure them to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. This is in line with a study conducted by Dorling (2009) which indicates that youths/women unemployment creates socio-political and economic problems within societies. Among these is criminal activity. The findings have also emphasized that unemployed young women are involved in alcohol and drug abuse/push.

High poverty level: Findings of Limb, (2011) confirm that, high poverty levels of women are as a result of their exclusion in the working sector. This was also emphasized by the World Bank (2013) which stated that lack of employment opportunities has an impact on the increasing poverty level among young women all over Africa.

Increased Vulnerability: Exclusion of women in the scheme of things leads women to being more vulnerable to gender-based violence. This is supported by Okojie (2013) who indicated that women and youths unemployment in most African cities is evident of 'idleness', where youth gather at bars and entertainment places to drink or use drugs, that, this creates opportunity for people to harass and explore them.

Psychological and Mental Effect: Psychologically, women face feelings of hopelessness, depression, loss of self-esteem and confidence, than men. In his study, Dorling (2009) found that more than (75%) people indicated that unemployment seriously affects stress level, and nearly half or (43%) of them indicated that this phenomenon has an impact on their sense of hopelessness. A significant minority or (26%) stated that their self-esteem is reduced due to having no means of survival. Also 24% indicated that their confidence is greatly reduced due to marginalization. Mentally, young women's mental health is affected by being idle without doing anything. Diraditsile and Mosetsanagape (2017) were of the opinion that most women experience excessive rates of disturbed sleep and depression due to disturbance and stress. This collaborate with the opinion of Egunjobi (2007), who stated that many social and mental problems such as suicide become more severe in women in times of high unemployment and stressful situations.

Effect of Women Marginalization in Informal Sector on the National Economy

The informal sector plays a controversial but important role in the economy of any nation. It provides jobs, reduces unemployment and even underemployment. It helps to combat malnutrition in many parts of the world. However, job security is often not guaranteed with its attendance low wages payment. Even though, informal sector or economy improves entrepreneurial activity, it does so at the detriment of regulation compliance by labour and tax regulations. Its role in most countries increases during a recession and declines when the economy is in slump.

Marginalization is an act of making someone feels as if they are not important and cannot influence decisions or event whereby putting someone in a position in which they have no power. This is a clear situation of women in the society in general and in Crushed Rock Company in particular. Though Crushed Rock Company is an informal sector owned by an individual, the normal procedures should be followed in whatever dealings it undertakes, since it is a big conglomerate. Informal sector, according to Carr and Chen (2002) is generally a larger source of employment for women in the developing world. He went further to state that measuring and defining is always a big challenge, as its definition varies over space. If it is true that informal sector is a source of employment for women, because of little beginning, how come the challenges and marginalization women faced in employment, not only in the Crushed Rock Company but other places of work? Women are marginalized in the Crushed Rock Company not because of the kind of work in the company which they believed, it is men compliance, but out-right marginalization. They also said that women are not strong enough to face the task of the company. But women are of the view that whatever job assigned to men were shown to them. So, women also want the job assignment to be shown to them to see whether they would not be able to do.

Overview of ILO's work on gender and the informal economy, Hamamoto et al., (2003) and ILO (2007) observed that the ILO's research and technical co-operation with respect to the informal economy was guided by its holistic agenda to promote "decent work" in all geographic economic areas and sectors. The framework for decent work was understood to constitute four key pillars of employment via opportunities, protection, rights and voice. The ILO initiative on the informal economy sought to develop an integrated policy approach that would promote inter-linked aspect of decent work. They observed that, to promote decent work, there must be needs to have a comprehensive and integrated strategy of policy to guide companies to regulate their activities in the country.

Method

Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Crushed Rock Company Limited Akamkpa, Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised social scientists and executives of some informal Companies. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 140 respondents which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Women Employment in the Informal Sector Questionnaire (WEISQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results and Discussion

Research Questions 1: The research question sought to find out the reasons women are not employed in the Crushed Rock Company. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the reasons women are not employed in the Crushed Rock Company

REASONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
HEALTH/SAFETY	53	37.86**
SOCIAL NORMS	45	32.14
RETRAINING FACT	23	16.43
DISCRIMINATION	19	13.57*
TOTAL	140	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the reasons women are not employed in the Crushed Rock Company. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the health/safety (37.86%) rated the highest percentage of the reasons women are not employed while the discrimination (13.57%) rated the least percentage of the reasons women are not employed in the Crushed Rock Company.

Research Question 2: The research question sought to find out the challenges faced by the women in the course of not being employed. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

Table 2: Percentage analysis of the challenges faced by the women in the course of not being employed

CHALLENGES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
POVERTY	55	39.29**
PSYCHO/MENTAL	43	30.71
CRIME	27	19.26
VULNERABILITY (weak)	15	10.71*
TOTAL	140	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the challenges faced by the women in the course of not being employed. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the poverty (39.29%) rated the highest percentage of the challenges while the vulnerability (10.71%) rated least percentage of the challenges faced by the women in the course of not being employed.

Research Question 3: The research question sought to find out the effects of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the effects of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy

Variable	N	Arithmetic mean	Expected mean	R	Remarks
Women Marginalization	140	14.25	12.5	0.84*	* Strong to perfect Relationship

Economy	11.47	12.5
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Source: Field Survey

Table 3 presents the result of the descriptive analysis of effects of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy. The two variables were observed to have strong to perfect relationship at 84%. The arithmetic mean for women marginalization (14.25) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5, meaning that, the arithmetic mean of economic (11.47) was observed to be lower than the expected mean score of 12.5 meaning that women marginalization adversely affect economic. The result therefore reveals that there is remarkable effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy.

Hypothesis 1: The null hypothesis states that there is no significant effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy. In order to test the hypothesis, regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 4).

Table 4: Simple Regression Analysis of effects of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.84a	0.70	0.70	1.14	0.70

***Significant at 0.05 level; df= 138; N= 140; critical R-value = 0.197**

The above table 4 shows that the calculated R-value (0.84) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.197 at 0.05 alpha level with 138 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.70 predicts 70% of the effects of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy. It was also deemed necessary to find out the influence of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 5).

Table 5: Analysis of variance of effects of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	421.94	1	421.94	326.54	.000b
Residual	178.31	138	1.29		
Total	600.25	139			

a. Dependent Variable: Economy

b. Predictors: (Constant), Women Marginalization

The above table presents the calculated F-value as (326.54) and the P-value as (000). Being that the P-value (000) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is significant effect exerted by the independent variables (women marginalization) on the dependent variable which is (economy). The result therefore means that there is significant effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy. The result therefore, is in agreement with the research findings of National sample survey organization NSSO (2013) and self-employed women Association (SEWA, 2013), that women marginalization in the place of work were rooted from the patriarchy- system where men were put ahead of women. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that women employment, not only in informal sector but holistically should be improved to avoid women being perpetual dependent on others. Crushed Rock Company though an informal sector or one-man business, should do something to improve women in the society. The study also concluded that there is significant effect of women marginalization in informal sector on the national economy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were deemed necessary:

1. Crushed Rock Company should orient women in order to give them more awareness on the working of the company.
2. Able women should be trained to enable them participate in the operations of the company.
3. Women on their part, should prepare and improve themselves like the male counterparts in order to be able to be fixed into the company's employment schedule; this will reduce the rigorous of training new employees before being fit to be employed.
4. The informal sector should be improved in order to avoid being confrontational with the host communities.
5. Government through labour law should legalize every impediment of informal sector to enable their workers feels that sense of belonging. This they should do by lessening tax burden of the company to enable them to employ more people.

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