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**The Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in
Tanzania: A Case of Babati District Council**

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Abstract

Purpose: Women entrepreneurs in Tanzania are making significant contributions to their local economies, driving innovation, and creating employment opportunities. However, they still face numerous challenges, including limited access to financing, inadequate business skills, and gender-based discrimination. To address these challenges and unlock the full potential of women entrepreneurs, mentorship programs have emerged as a powerful mechanism.

Methodology: The study examined the effect of empowering women entrepreneurs through mentoring programs, a case study of Babati District Council. The study used mixed research approach and employed sequential explanatory research design. Descriptive and regression analysis were used to analyze the data and presented by tables and figures.

Findings: The findings revealed the strong relationship between mentorship programs and women entrepreneurs' empowerment, as evidenced by a high R-squared value of 0.76. This means that approximately 76% of the variation in women entrepreneurs' empowerment can be explained by mentorship programs. The significant relationship between mentorship programs and women entrepreneurs' empowerment is further supported by a low p-value of 0.001, indicating that the observed relationship is unlikely to be due to chance. The study concluded mentorship programs have a significant impact on women entrepreneurs' empowerment.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: From the findings, it recommended fostering mentorship opportunities to support and uplift women in their entrepreneurial journeys. This study has contributed to the advancement of knowledge and practice in the field of mentoring programs for women entrepreneurs in Tanzania. The research has provided valuable insights and recommendations that can guide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in their efforts to support women entrepreneurs. The study proposed a theoretical framework that elucidates the means by which mentoring programs can empower women entrepreneurs. It also identified crucial elements of effective mentoring programs, including regular meetings, clearly defined goals and expectations, active listening, and constructive feedback. Additionally, the study pushed for policies that foster an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs, including access to financing, education, and networking opportunities. Such policies can facilitate the growth and development of women-led enterprises.

Keywords: *Mentorship Program, Women Entrepreneurs, Women Empowerment*

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INTRODUCTION

In the world women play a crucial role in the economic development of their families and communities but certain obstacles such as poverty, unemployment, low household income and societal discriminations have hindered their effective performance of that role (Siba, 2019; Sibanda, 2016). As such, most of them embark on entrepreneurial activities to support their families. Entrepreneurship is the processes of discovery of opportunities, innovation, and the subsequent creation of new economic activity, often via individual, environment, and the creation of a new organization (Abebe & Kegne, 2023). In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the significant role women play in driving economic growth and development (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021).

Women entrepreneurs have emerged as powerful agents of change, contributing to job creation, poverty reduction, and social empowerment. Despite their immense potential, women entrepreneurs often face numerous challenges, including limited access to finance, lack of business networks, and inadequate training and support systems (Moreno-Gavara, Jiménez-Zarco & Alabi, 2019). To address these barriers and harness the untapped potential of women entrepreneurs, mentoring programs have emerged as effective tools for empowering women and fostering their entrepreneurial endeavors (Raposa, Rhodes, Stams, Card, Burton, Schwartz, Sykes, Kanchewa, Kupersmidt & Hussain, 2019).

The importance of empowering women entrepreneurs cannot be overstated. Women make up a significant portion of the global population, and their participation in economic activities is crucial for sustainable development (Fred, Nduhura, & Ronald, 2018). Empowering women entrepreneurs not only contributes to economic growth but also has far-reaching social and cultural implications. By providing women with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support, mentoring programs can help break down gender barriers, challenge traditional norms, and promote gender equality in entrepreneurship (Tanti, Nathan, Sulisty, Hanim, & Sarjuni, 2021).

Mentoring programs offer a structured framework for women entrepreneurs to receive guidance, support, and advice from experienced mentors who have already navigated the challenges of starting and growing a business (Farkas et al., 2019). These programs facilitate knowledge transfer, skill development, and networking opportunities, enabling women entrepreneurs to overcome obstacles, gain confidence, and make informed decisions (Elliott et al., 2020; Voytko et al., 2018). Mentors, often successful business owners or industry experts, provide valuable insights, share practical experiences, and offer personalized advice tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of each mentee (Turner-Moffatt, 2019).

In Tanzania many women lack this, whereas the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunity depends on the entrepreneur's level of education, skills or knowledge acquired through work experience, social network and credit (Nziku & Henry, 2020); hence the need for mentoring programs as a factor especially in developing economies is highlighted. The case study will delve into the specific context of Babati District Council, where women entrepreneurs face unique challenges. Gender disparities, limited access to finance and resources, and cultural norms that prioritize male entrepreneurship have hindered the progress of women entrepreneurs in the region. By examining the experiences of women entrepreneurs in Babati and their involvement in mentoring programs, we can gain valuable insights into the transformative potential of such initiatives.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the pivotal role that women play in economic development and poverty reduction worldwide. Tanzania, a country in East Africa, is no exception to this global trend. Women entrepreneurs in Tanzania are making significant contributions to their local economies, driving innovation, and creating employment opportunities. However, they still face numerous challenges, including limited access to financing, inadequate business skills, and gender-based discrimination. To address these challenges and unlock the full potential of women entrepreneurs, mentorship programs have emerged as a powerful mechanism. By providing guidance, support, and knowledge-sharing opportunities, these programs help women overcome obstacles, build confidence, and enhance their entrepreneurial skills. Since multiple mentorship programs have been initiated, there is limited studies shows in what extent the programs have been effective. Therefore, the study wanted to fill the gap by examine the effect of empowering women entrepreneurs through mentoring programs: a case study of Babati district council.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this case study hold significant implications for policymakers, development agencies, and organizations focused on women's empowerment and entrepreneurship. By understanding the effectiveness of mentoring programs in empowering women entrepreneurs in Babati District Council, stakeholders can design and implement targeted interventions to address the specific needs and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the region. Furthermore, the lessons learned from this case study can inform the development of scalable and sustainable mentoring programs in other contexts, contributing to the broader goal of empowering women entrepreneurs globally.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the effect of empowering women entrepreneurs through mentoring programs: a case study of Babati district council

Scope of the Study

This case study will explore the impact of mentoring programs in empowering women entrepreneurs in the context of Babati District Council. Located in Tanzania, Babati District Council represents a unique setting where women entrepreneurs face distinct challenges due to socio-cultural norms, limited access to resources, and a rapidly changing business landscape. By examining the experiences of women entrepreneurs in Babati and their participation in mentoring programs, we can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of such initiatives in promoting women's empowerment and fostering entrepreneurial success.

Problem Statement

Despite the importance of rapid growth of research focusing on women enterprenurs in Africa on various aspects, few attempts have been made to investigate its effectiveness of mentoring programs on empowering women enterpreneurs especially those operating in Tanzania. Furthermore, a systemetic literature review on mentoring programs for women empowerment conducted by Kikuli (2018) and Mtani & Nyangarika (2020) revealed that research in this area has limited attention and requires further investigation. Therefore , this study sought address this gap in the literature by examining the effectiveness of mentoring programs empowering women entrepreneurs in Babati Distric Council, Tanzania. By evaluating these programs, this research hopes to contribute to the development of more effective policies and initiatives aimed at supporting women entrepreneurship in Tanzania.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study guided by the three theories namely Social Learning Theory; Self-Efficacy Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. These theories provide different perspectives on how mentorship programs can empower women entrepreneurs, but it's important to recognize that no single theory can fully explain or predict the complex dynamics involved. Therefore, a combination of theories and a comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis would be beneficial.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura proposes that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling of others' behaviors(Bandura, 1999). It suggests that people acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes by observing and interacting with role models and mentors in their social environment. The theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning, where individuals learn by observing others and imitating their behaviors.Social Learning Theory is highly relevant to the study as it explains how women entrepreneurs can benefit from mentorship programs. Through observing successful mentors, women entrepreneurs can learn from their experiences, acquire new skills and knowledge, and develop a more empowered mindset. By witnessing the achievements and strategies of their mentors, women entrepreneurs can gain confidence and motivation to pursue their own entrepreneurial goals.One weakness of Social Learning Theory is that it focuses primarily on observational learning and may not fully account for other factors that influence women's empowerment. Structural barriers, such as limited access to finance or discriminatory policies, may hinder women's progress even if they have access to mentorship programs. Additionally, the theory tends to overlook the broader socio-cultural and systemic influences that shape women's entrepreneurial experiences.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-Efficacy Theory b Albert Bandura emphasizes the belief in one's own ability to successfully perform specific tasks or achieve specific goals. It suggests that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to set ambitious goals, persevere in the face of challenges, and ultimately succeed. Self-efficacy is influenced by four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states(Bandura, 1977, 1986). Efficacy Theory is highly relevant to the study because mentorship programs can enhance women entrepreneurs' self-efficacy. By receiving guidance, support, and feedback from mentors, women entrepreneurs can develop a stronger belief in their capabilities, which can lead to increased empowerment and entrepreneurial success. Mentors can provide positive role modeling, share success stories, and provide constructive feedback, all of which can contribute to enhancing women's self-efficacy beliefs. Although, the theory doesn't fully consider the influence of external factors such as socio-cultural norms, access to resources, or institutional support, which can significantly impact women's entrepreneurial empowerment. Women may face systemic barriers and biases that affect their self-efficacy, regardless of mentorship support. The theory may also underestimate the complexity of self-efficacy beliefs and their interactions with other psychological factors.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory developed by James V. Downton suggests that effective leaders inspire and motivate their followers to go beyond their self-interests and work towards achieving a common vision or goal. Transformational leaders often exhibit traits such as charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence (Downton, 1971). They have the ability to foster a sense of purpose and empowerment among their followers. They create a positive and supportive work environment that encourages innovation, growth, and personal development (Jayapriya, 2017). The theory is relevant to the study because mentors can act as transformational leaders for women entrepreneurs. Through their guidance and mentorship, they can inspire and empower women to overcome challenges, think innovatively, and become agents of change in their entrepreneurial endeavors. Transformational mentors can provide a vision, set high expectations, and create a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages women entrepreneurs to take risks, develop their skills, and pursue their goals. They can foster a sense of empowerment and self-belief among women entrepreneurs, encouraging them to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Theory is weak as it focuses more on the qualities and behaviors of leaders, and less on the specific outcomes or impacts on women's empowerment. While transformational leadership can positively influence women entrepreneurs' empowerment, it may not fully capture the contextual factors that shape women's entrepreneurship. The theory may overlook the broader socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that influence women's access to resources, networks, and opportunities. Additionally, it may not consider the potential power dynamics within mentoring relationships, where power imbalances or biases can impact the effectiveness of transformational leadership behaviors.

Importance of Mentorship Program on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs' mentorship programs are of paramount importance in Tanzania. These programs empower women entrepreneurs by providing guidance, support, and knowledge, helping them overcome obstacles and seize opportunities. Mentorship programs also facilitate the building of networks and connections, enhance access to finance and resources, foster personal and professional growth, challenge gender stereotypes, and have a positive impact on the economy and the business ecosystem as a whole (Mtani & Nyangarika, 2020). By investing in women entrepreneurs and providing them with the necessary tools and support, Tanzania can unlock their immense potential, drive economic growth, and achieve sustainable development.

Enhancing Business Skills

One of the primary benefits of mentorship programs is their ability to enhance the business skills of women entrepreneurs. Many women in Tanzania face barriers in accessing formal education or business training. Mentorship programs bridge this gap by providing practical knowledge and expertise. Mentors, who are often experienced business professionals or successful entrepreneurs, impart valuable insights on various aspects of business management, including financial planning, marketing strategies, and operations management. This knowledge equips women entrepreneurs with the necessary tools to make informed decisions, navigate challenges, and seize opportunities, ultimately leading to the growth and sustainability of their ventures.

Building Confidence and Overcoming Gender Bias

Gender biases and stereotypes persist in many societies, including Tanzania, and can significantly hinder women's entrepreneurial success. Mentorship programs play a crucial role in challenging these biases by providing a supportive environment where women can develop their self-confidence and assertiveness. Mentors serve as role models, sharing their own experiences and success stories, thus inspiring and motivating women entrepreneurs to believe in their abilities (Tanti et al., 2021). Moreover, mentors can offer guidance on how to navigate gender-specific challenges, such as accessing financing, networking, or breaking into male-dominated industries. As a result, women entrepreneurs in mentorship programs are better equipped to challenge societal norms and expectations, fostering a more inclusive and empowering business environment.

Facilitating Access to Networks and Resources

Access to networks and resources is vital for the growth and success of any entrepreneur. However, women often face limited opportunities to connect with influential stakeholders, potential investors, or industry experts. Mentorship programs serve as a gateway to valuable networks, enabling women entrepreneurs to establish meaningful connections and collaborations. Mentors can introduce mentees to their professional network, open doors to funding opportunities, and provide access to markets (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021; Elliott et al., 2020). By expanding their networks, women entrepreneurs can leverage the collective expertise, support, and resources available, accelerating their growth trajectories and increasing their chances of long-term success.

Fostering Innovation and Economic Growth

Women entrepreneurs bring unique perspectives, ideas, and solutions to the business landscape. By fostering women's entrepreneurship, mentorship programs contribute to innovation and economic growth. Mentors can help mentees identify and capitalize on untapped market opportunities, encourage creativity, and offer guidance on product development or service improvement. Furthermore, by nurturing a supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs, mentorship programs contribute to the overall economic empowerment of women, leading to poverty reduction, job creation, and the development of sustainable communities (Kikula, 2018).

Breaking Gender Stereotypes

Tanzania, like many other societies, has deeply ingrained gender stereotypes that limit the roles and opportunities available to women. Women entrepreneurs often face biases and discrimination, both overt and subtle, which hinder their progress. Mentorship programs challenge these stereotypes by showcasing successful women entrepreneurs who have shattered glass ceilings and achieved remarkable success (Bobek et al., 2022). By providing women with mentors who have overcome similar challenges, these programs demonstrate that entrepreneurship is not limited to men and that women can thrive in various industries. This representation and empowerment of women entrepreneurs through mentorship programs contribute to changing societal perceptions and norms, fostering a more inclusive and equitable business environment.

Economic Impact and Job Creation

Women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economic growth and job creation in Tanzania. By supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs through mentorship programs,

the nation can harness their full potential and maximize their contributions to the economy. When women entrepreneurs succeed, they create employment opportunities for others, particularly women, thus addressing the issue of unemployment and poverty in the country. Additionally, women-led businesses often prioritize social and environmental responsibility, contributing to sustainable development and community empowerment. Mentorship programs play a vital role in nurturing these socially conscious entrepreneurs, encouraging them to pursue business models that have a positive impact on society and the environment.

Strengthening the Business Ecosystem

Mentorship programs for women entrepreneurs contribute to the overall strengthening of the business ecosystem in Tanzania. By supporting the growth and success of women-led businesses, these programs promote competition, innovation, and diversity within the market. As more women entrepreneurs enter and thrive in various industries, it creates a more dynamic and inclusive business environment (Fred et al., 2018; Solenski, 2019). This, in turn, attracts investment, fosters entrepreneurship, and enhances the overall competitiveness of the nation. Mentorship programs also encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among entrepreneurs, leading to the formation of supportive networks and business partnerships. Ultimately, a robust and diverse business ecosystem benefits all stakeholders, including women entrepreneurs, investors, consumers, and the government.

Empirical Review

Kikula, (2018) launched the study to find out how female entrepreneurs maintain their businesses in the face of strong patriarchy in their communities, where men hold the majority of authority and inherit all valuable property, including houses, land, and animals. Evaluating the difficulties women entrepreneurs encounter in running their businesses was the main goal. The study's justification was based on the necessity of gathering empirical data to guide plans for establishing supportive business environments that will empower more women to play key roles in economic growth and enhance the state of the economy as a whole. The results showed that lack of funding and unstable marketplaces for their goods and services presented the largest obstacles for female entrepreneurs attempting to manage their entrepreneurial endeavors for both launching and growing their own company activities. These obstacles can be reduced by empowering women, for instance by providing them with training and seminars on several alternative financing methods in addition to their own valued assets, which can serve as a solid foundation for funding their businesses. Training and this ought to go hand in hand. Therefore, it is advised that training capacity be developed further in order to provide women entrepreneurs with the information and abilities necessary to run profitable businesses.

Mtani & Nyangarika, (2020) conducted research in the Nyamagana area of the Mwanza Region on the barriers to women's entrepreneurship and their effects on community welfare. The study's conclusions demonstrate the variety of enterprises run by female entrepreneurs in Mwanza Municipal. The majority of female entrepreneurs were sole proprietors, as the results showed. This was because the enterprises they were running were small-scale and required less cash. The study demonstrates that the obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs can be eliminated or lessened by giving them access to education, empowering them financially, fostering a positive business atmosphere, and having men assist their wives. .. The study's conclusions suggested that men encourage their wives' entrepreneurial endeavors by getting involved in them. According to this study, the majority of women expressed dissatisfaction with some of the husbands of female entrepreneurs, citing a lack of support for their spouses

as a reason why they found it challenging to fulfill their dual responsibilities as moms and business owners. This study revealed that women found it difficult to fulfill the duties of both mother and father in their families when their families were divided, and that companies also contributed to the families' increased income.

Germann (2023) investigated the impact of female mentors on women's empowerment in Uganda. Results from a randomized controlled field trial with 930 Ugandan business owners demonstrate that while mentor gender has minimal influence on male business owners, it has a significant influence on female business owners. When compared to the control group, the average rise in firm sales and profits for female entrepreneurs under the guidance of a female mentor was 29% and 34%, respectively. These estimations are significantly higher for female entrepreneurs with high goals. On the other hand, as compared to the control group, the performance of female entrepreneurs led by a male mentor did not show any significant improvement. According to the study's suggestive mechanism findings, relationships are more prevalent in female mentor-mentee situations.

Solenski (2019) established a study to quantify the impacts of mentorship among female micro-entrepreneurs in Medellin, Colombia on empowerment. Unprofitable microbusinesses are disproportionately common in developing nations like Colombia, where a large number of them are run by women. Poverty is sustained in large part by internal factors like disempowerment. In order to assess the extra value of localized expertise to micro-borrowers, the study pairs 18 successful entrepreneurs with 52 underprivileged female micro-entrepreneurs in Medellin, Colombia, through a 6-month mentorship intervention. The study assessed the impact of a random assignment procedure on mentees' aspirations, optimism, locus of control, support, self-efficacy, and self-confidence in order to determine the shift in female empowerment. According to the study, mentoring short-term boosts female empowerment by .71 deviations. Over time, the effects of treatment fade. According to moderation analysis, a key predictor of the diverse treatment effects is the quality of the mentor.

Research Gaps

The existing literature on women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America highlights several research gaps that need to be addressed. Firstly, there is a lack of focus on the intersectionality of gender and other social identities, such as race, class, age, and sexuality, which can significantly impact women's entrepreneurial experiences and outcomes. Secondly, many studies concentrate on women entrepreneurs in specific locations, such as Uganda and Colombia, and fail to provide a comprehensive view of women entrepreneurs across different regions and industries. Thirdly, some studies tend to focus on the individual woman entrepreneur and her personal characteristics, rather than examining the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem and how it impacts women entrepreneurs. For example, few studies have explored the role of technology in supporting women entrepreneurs, despite its growing recognition as a tool for empowering women and promoting gender equality. Similarly, little attention has been given to the impact of policy and regulatory frameworks on women entrepreneurs, which can significantly influence their ability to start and grow their businesses.

Fourthly, there is limited research on the unique challenges and opportunities facing women entrepreneurs in rural areas, who often operate in isolation and with limited access to resources and support. Fifthly, gender norms and stereotypes can significantly influence women's entrepreneurial aspirations, behaviors, and outcomes, but this aspect has not been adequately addressed in the existing literature. Sixthly, networking and collaborations among women

entrepreneurs are critical for their success and empowerment, but this topic has received limited attention in the studies reviewed. Seventhly, there is a lack of research on the relationship between women entrepreneurs' mental health and well-being and their ability to successfully launch and grow their businesses.

Lastly, while the studies acknowledge the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the economy, they do not fully explore the potential of women entrepreneurs to drive economic growth and development, particularly in developing countries. Addressing these research gaps can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics influencing women entrepreneurs and inform effective strategies to support and empower them.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is a tool used by the researchers to guide their inquiry to identify research variables and clarify relationship among them (Fuertes et al., 2020) It is a product of a qualitative process of theorization, which interlinks the variables together and shows a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Figure 2.1 presents the conceptual framework of the study.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variables

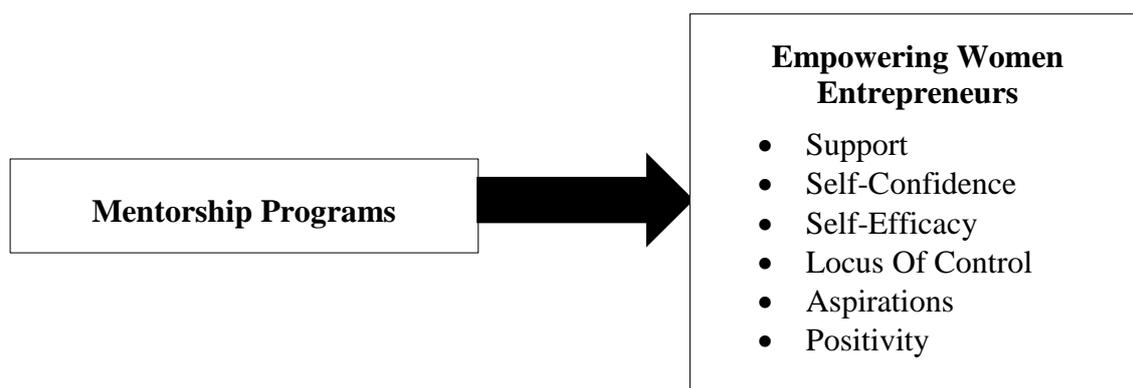


Figure 1: The conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews and observations (Theophilus, 2018). By collecting data on the number of women entrepreneurs involved in mentoring programs, their business growth, access to finance, and changes in confidence levels, the study assessed the impact of mentoring on their entrepreneurial journey. Qualitative interviews with women entrepreneurs and mentors provided deeper insights into their experiences and the specific benefits they have derived from the mentoring programs.

Research Design

The study adopted a sequential explanatory design. This design involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to explain or expand upon the quantitative findings (Toyon, 2021). This sequential approach enabled a deeper understanding of the impact of mentoring programs on women entrepreneurs in Babati District.

Study Area

The study area is Babati District, located in Tanzania. Babati District offers a suitable context for investigating women entrepreneurship and mentoring programs, providing valuable insights that can be applied to similar settings. The study also consisted the beneficiaries of the women mentorship programs implemented by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Babati District.

Population

The target population for this study consisted of women entrepreneurs in Babati District who have participated in mentoring programs. Inclusion criteria include women who have been in business for a certain period, have received mentoring support, and were actively engaged in entrepreneurship. Exclusion criteria may involve women who have not participated in mentoring programs or have recently started their businesses.

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who meet the inclusion criteria. This method ensured that the sample consists of women entrepreneurs with relevant experience in mentoring programs. The sample size of 50 participants was included in the study.

Data Collection Methods

To gather relevant data, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods can be utilized. A structured questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data on participants' demographic information, business performance indicators, mentoring program characteristics and perceived outcomes. The questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interviews and online surveys. For qualitative data, in-depth interviews: Semi-structured interviews have conducted with a subset of participants to obtain qualitative data. These interviews explored participants' experiences, challenges faced perceived benefits, and suggestions for improving mentoring programs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the quantitative data. Additionally, inferential statistics; correlation analysis and regression analysis have been employed to examine relationships between variables and identify factors influencing the effectiveness of mentoring programs. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involves identifying recurring themes, coding the data, and organizing it into meaningful categories. Interpretations and explanations were derived from the qualitative findings to complement the quantitative results.

FINDINGS

Profile of the Respondents

The study examined the age distribution; the majority of respondents fell within the 45-55 age range. This suggests that entrepreneurship sector for women may have a predominantly mature workforce, comprising individuals with substantial experience and expertise. Additionally, 28% of respondents were aged between 30-45 years, 26% were between 18-30 years, and 12% were above 55 years old. These findings indicate a diverse age demographic within the entrepreneurship sector, encompassing both experienced professionals and younger workers.

Regarding entrepreneur's experience, a significant majority of respondents stated that they had more than 10 years of experience in the field. Specifically, 32% reported working between 5-10 years, while 14% had less than 5 years of work experience. These figures demonstrate the value placed on extensive experience within the entrepreneur activities. The study also examined the participation of respondents in mentorship program. The findings revealed that 22% of respondents had participated in such programs once, 40% had participated 2-3 times, 15% had participated 3-5 times, and 8% had participated in more than 5 times.

Table 1: Respondents Profile

		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-30	13	26.0%
	30-45	14	28.0%
	45-55	17	34.0%
	55 and above	6	12.0%
Experience	0-5 Years	7	14.0%
	5-10 years	16	32.0%
	10 years and above	27	54.0%
Mentorship Participated	1 time	11	22.0%
	2-3 times	20	40.0%
	3-5 time	15	30.0%
	more than 5times	4	8.0%
		50	100.0%

Source: Survey Findings (2023)

Regression Result

The study employed the multiple regression test to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study. In this study, the regression test used to measure the effect of the mentorship program on support, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, locus of control, aspirations, and positivity of women. The findings presented in Table 4.2 indicate a strong and noteworthy association between the independent variables and the dependent variable (effectiveness of the mentorship programs). The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.895 suggests a high degree of linear relationship between the variables. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R square) of 0.801 implies that approximately 80.1% of the variance in the effectiveness of the mentorship programs can be explained by the three factors included in the model. This means that support, self-confidence, self-efficacy, locus of control, aspirations and positivity collectively contributed to a significant proportion of the observed variations in the women mentorship program. However, it is important to note that approximately 19.9% of the variance is influenced by factors other than the ones considered in the model.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.871a	0.761	0.751	0.231

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship Program

Table 3: Anova

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1.00	8.29	8.29	150.13	0.00
Residual	48.00	2.65	0.06		
Total	49.00	10.94			

- i. Predictors: (Constant), Mentorship Program
- ii. Dependent Variable: Women Entrepreneurs' Empowerment

The goodness of fit for the hypothesized model, which posited a cause-effect relationship between the predictors and the outcome (Women Empowerment level), was assessed using an ANOVA table and the F-value. The obtained F-value was 150.13, and it was found to be significant at the 0.001% level of significance. This indicates that the model provides a highly satisfactory fit to the data. The significance of the F-value suggests that the relationship between the predictors and the outcome variable is not likely due to chance alone. In other words, the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by random variation in the data. Instead, it provides evidence that the predictors (mentorship program) have a substantial impact on the women empowerment level. The high F-value indicates a strong association between the predictors and the outcome. It suggests that the predictors collectively explain a significant amount of the variance in the effectiveness of the training programs. The larger the F-value, the more confident can be in the relationship between the predictors and the outcome. In this case, the substantial F-value of 150.13 indicates a robust and highly significant relationship.

Based on these findings, It can conclude that the model, which includes mentorship program as predictors of the fits the data extremely well. The predictors explain a significant proportion of the variance in the outcome variable, supporting the notion that they play a crucial role in determining the women empowerment level . However, it is important to consider that there may be other factors not included in the model that also contribute to the outcome variable, and further research could explore these additional factors.

Table 4: Coefficient Results

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	1.59	0.23	7.03	0.00
Mentorship Program	0.64	0.05	12.25	0.00

- a. Dependent Variable: Women Entrepreneurs' Empowerment

The regression coefficient results presented in Table 4.4 provide information about the contribution of independent variable to the regression model with the dependent variable. The beta values associated with variable indicate the magnitude and direction of their influence on the outcome. The beta value of variable ($b=0.64$) suggest that an increase in mentorship program has been effectively on the level of women empowerment. This means that individuals who go for mentorship program more likely to expand on support, self-confidence, self-efficacy, locus of control, aspirations, and positivity, hence empower women. The result also shows the p value of 0.001 which shows that there is significant positive effect of mentorship program on women entrepreneur.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

From the regression results indicate a strong relationship between mentorship programs and women entrepreneurs' empowerment, as evidenced by a high R-squared value of 0.76. This means that approximately 76% of the variation in women entrepreneurs' empowerment can be explained by mentorship programs. The significant relationship between mentorship programs and women entrepreneurs' empowerment is further supported by a low p-value of 0.001, indicating that the observed relationship is unlikely to be due to chance. These findings have important implications for understanding the role of mentorship programs in empowering women entrepreneurs. Mentorship programs provide guidance, support, and knowledge transfer from experienced individuals to aspiring or early-stage entrepreneurs. By connecting women entrepreneurs with mentors who have relevant industry experience and expertise, these programs can help address the unique challenges and barriers faced by women in entrepreneurship as it argued by (Kikula, 2018).

Mentorship programs and women entrepreneurs' empowerment are strongly linked, suggesting that mentoring plays a critical role in enhancing the skills, knowledge, confidence, and access to resources of women entrepreneurs. By engaging in mentorship programs, women entrepreneurs are able to receive valuable insights about business strategies, create networks, and navigate the complexities of running a successful business (Mtani & Nyangarika, 2020). Through these mentoring relationships, women entrepreneurs gain access to a wider range of connections, potential investors, and customers, which can significantly contribute to their overall success. Additionally, mentorship programs can help women entrepreneurs overcome gender-related biases and stereotypes that may otherwise hinder their progress. Mentors can offer guidance on how to navigate challenges specific to gender, especially in industries or cultures that are predominantly male-dominated. They serve as role models, inspiring and motivating women entrepreneurs to pursue their goals and aspirations, regardless of societal or cultural barriers they may encounter.

During the interview with one of beneficiary of the mentorship program, she stated that mentorship provides women entrepreneurs with valuable knowledge and skills. Mentors, with their extensive experience and expertise, can offer valuable insights into various aspects of running a business, such as marketing, finance, operations, and management. They can guide women entrepreneurs in developing effective strategies, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. This knowledge empowers women entrepreneurs to tackle challenges confidently and make informed decisions for their businesses. She further stated that;

“Mentorship programs facilitate access to valuable resources. Mentors can help women entrepreneurs connect with a wide network of contacts, potential investors, and customers. These connections are crucial in opening doors and creating opportunities for business growth and expansion. By tapping into their mentors' networks, women entrepreneurs can access resources such as funding, partnerships, and collaborations that may otherwise be difficult to obtain independently.”

Furthermore, mentorship programs help women entrepreneurs navigate gender-specific challenges. Mentors can offer guidance on overcoming biases, stereotypes, and discrimination that women may face in their entrepreneurial journeys. They can provide support by sharing their own experiences, offering advice on managing work-life balance, and providing encouragement during times of self-doubt. The presence of a mentor can help women

entrepreneurs build confidence and resilience to overcome these obstacles. Other participant stated that;

“Mentorship programs serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for women entrepreneurs. Mentors act as role models, demonstrating what is possible and encouraging women to pursue their aspirations. Seeing successful women entrepreneurs who have gone through similar struggles can instill a sense of belief in themselves and inspire them to overcome challenges and reach their full potential.”

Conclusion

In a comprehensive study analyzing the impact of mentorship programs on women entrepreneurs, regression results showed a strong and significant relationship between mentorship and empowerment. The study included a sample of women entrepreneurs who participated in mentorship programs and compared their outcomes to a control group. The findings revealed that women entrepreneurs who had access to mentorship programs experienced greater empowerment in various areas like self-support, self-confidence, self-efficacy, locus of control, aspirations as well as positivity. In conclusion, the regression results demonstrated that mentorship programs have a significant impact on women entrepreneurs' empowerment. They provide crucial knowledge, resources, support, and inspiration, which contribute to the growth and success of women-owned businesses. These findings highlight the importance of fostering mentorship opportunities to support and uplift women in their entrepreneurial journeys.

This research carries important consequences for numerous groups involved, especially female business owners, mentors, decision-makers, and scholars. Among these implications are heightened recognition of the advantages of mentorship initiatives, refined development of such programs, boosted abilities and self-assurance among female entrepreneurs, expanded presence of women in influential roles, legislative adjustments favorable to women's entrepreneurial ventures, and ongoing investigation into mentorship schemes.

The study highlights the positive impact of mentoring programs on women entrepreneurs' business growth, networking opportunities, and personal development. This increased awareness can lead to more women entrepreneurs seeking out mentorship opportunities and more organizations offering such programs. The study provides insights into the characteristics of effective mentoring programs, such as having a structured approach, regular meetings, and clear goals. Program designers can use these findings to create more effective mentoring programs that cater to the unique needs of women entrepreneurs. By participating in mentoring programs, women entrepreneurs can develop their business management, networking, and leadership skills, leading to increased confidence and competence in running their businesses. As women entrepreneurs benefit from mentoring programs, they are more likely to take on leadership roles within their industries and communities, contributing to greater gender diversity and representation.

The study's findings can inform policies that promote women's entrepreneurship, such as providing funding for mentoring programs or creating an enabling environment for women-led businesses. Policymakers can use this information to draft policies that address the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

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