



Impact of Micro Credit on the Growth of Women-Owned Small Businesses in Limbe I, Cameroon

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Research Article

Abstract

Purpose -- This study aims to analyze the impact of microcredit on the growth of women-owned small businesses in Limbe I Cameroon. More specifically, to identify, map and characterize the women-owned small businesses in Limbe I that have benefited from micro-credit, to assess the extent to which microcredit has assisted in the expansion of their businesses, and to investigate the challenges faced by the women small businesses in Limbe I.

Design /Methodology/Approach – The research design adopted for this study was ex-post facto or causal-comparative research design. A sample of 30 women-owned small businesses that have ever benefitted from microcredit was selected using a purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for this study was a well-structured and validated questionnaire and data for the study was analyzed and presented on tables, bar charts, using descriptive and inferential statistics assisted by SPSS software version 20 and the hypothesis was tested using a regression.

Findings – The findings revealed that microcredit has a very low level of impact on the growth of women-owned small businesses in Limbe I. The findings also unveiled the major challenges faced by women entrepreneurs viz. the pledge for collateral security, the lack of marketing skills and knowledge, the absence of proper training and support, the cumbersomeness of documents for the acquisition of loans, the high-interest rate, the long period of time taken before granting their loans and an absence of knowledge and awareness amongst women about budgeting control resource management and commercial functions.

Practical Implications- The study recommends that the women-owned businesses of Limbe I should unite them by creating an association on which to debate about their challenges. The Delegation of the small and medium scale enterprise should organize training to enhance their business management skills.

Keywords: Women-owned businesses, Business Growth, Small scale businesses, microcredit, Cameroon

1. Introduction

Microcredit consists of small loans provided to micro-enterprises. Microcredit dates back in the 19th century when money lenders were informally performing the role now played by financial institutions. The informal financial institutions constitute village banks, cooperative credit unions, state-owned banks, and social venture capital funds to help the poor. The origin of microcredit is traceable to the 14th Century when the Franciscan monks founded the community-oriented pawnshops (World Bank, 2009). In the 19th Century, the establishment of the Credit Union Movement in Western Europe added a significant impetus to the growth of the microcredit industry. These early movements played a crucial role in the establishment of pro-poor institutions which brought accessible and financing opportunities to low the income earners (World Bank, 2009).

In the mid-20th Century, a similar movement emerged in Bangladesh. As noted by Besley (1995), a renowned economist and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Muhammad Yunus initiated and propagated the idea. It later led to the establishment of the microcredit institution, the *Grameen Bank*, which served more than 7 million low-income Bangladeshi women by 2007. The success of the institution inspired its replication in India, Philippines, Indonesia, and Pakistan, among other countries in the region. Since then microcredit, programs have been expanded all over the world. A study conducted by the World Bank (1999) indicated that about 25 million people worldwide were using microcredit to finance their business activities, with women forming up to 90% of beneficiaries. By 2005, up to 113 million borrowers had benefited from microcredit services and by 2010, the microcredit industry addressed the financing needs of up to 150 million low-income earners, especially in developing countries (World Bank, 2009). This has eased the access to finance to the vulnerable and low-income segment that was perceived accessing commercial banks a near impossibility.

In most countries, commercial banks have not effectively addressed the financial needs of low-income earners, due to stringent baseline requirements. Besides, commercial banks perceive low-income earners as not being credit-worthy due to a lack of assets that can be used as collateral against credit facilities (World Bank, 2009). In this regard, credit facilities provided by Microcredit Institutions (MFIs) play an important role by filling the gap for financial services among low income-earners, the majority of who include women. The services provided by MFIs are flexible and tailored to meet the financing needs of women in rural and urban settings (Chandrasekhar, 2004).

Access to financial services by a small enterprise is normally seen as one of the constraints limiting their benefits from credit facilities. However, in most cases, the access problem, especially among formal financial institutions, is one created by the institutions mainly through their lending policies. Enterprise performance implies attributes that show changes in volumes of activities or physical size. There is an ongoing debate as to the best way to stimulate women entrepreneurship that contributes to both economic and social inclusion (Welter, 2004). A thorough understanding of how SMEs grow is an important issue because, according to Radovic (2007), small and medium-sized enterprises provide the engine for economic growth for many countries. As a result of gender inequalities, women remain to some degree in all parts

of the globe-untapped economic resources and underutilized economic assets (Landes, 2003). Most researchers, especially in Cameroon, have not focused their studies on women-owned enterprises and credit accessibility, hence the reason for the current study.

The establishment of microfinance in Limbe was a means of providing financial accessibility to all women-owned small businesses, who cannot afford large loans from the banking institutions especially the Limbe women with a representation of 54 percent of the total population. Women-owned small businesses makeup approximately 65 percent of the total business and account for 41percent of all private sector employment where women are headed for 42 percent of enterprises in the country and they comprise 58 percent of the enterprises in the informal sector which accounts for the 30 percent of the GDP (Magnido, 2009). Despite microfinance contribution to the economy, women in Limbe like those around the world, continue to experience many problems in their businesses which have led to a different mix of constraints including financial credit accessibility, the limited share of contracts, access to trade and procurement guidelines and regulations and limited knowledge about financial services and businesses. It is upon the above constraint that this study is carried out to assess the socioeconomic impact of microfinance services on the growth of women-owned small saloons in Limbe municipality. This study considers the following specific objectives:

- To identify, map and characterize the women-owned small businesses in Limbe I that have benefited from micro-credit;
- To assess the extent to which microcredit has assisted in the expansion of women-owned small businesses in Limbe I;
- To investigate the challenges faced by the women-owned small businesses in Limbe I.

2. Literature Review

Microcredit provides an opportunity for low-income earners, including women to improve their economic and social status. Besides economic empowerment, microcredit carries with it numerous other benefits for women, including better control of their reproductive health as well as reduced vulnerability to domestic violence. Better incomes make women less vulnerable to gender-based violence perpetrated by their partners (Goetz & Sen, 1994; Mayoux, 1998a). As noted by Ghadoliya (2000), 'microcredit plays a crucial role in the socio-economic empowerment of women by promoting suitable conditions for them to move from positions of marginalization within households, to one of greater roles in decision-making at the community, national and international levels'.

Most women in the rural and urban sectors of most developing countries are either self-employed or employed in family-based enterprises that include both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors such as homestead agriculture, livestock and poultry rearing, fish farming, nursery and tree plantation, toolmaking, sewing, fishing net making, food processing, tailoring, garments making and rice processing among others, and have been regular and invisible sources to family income supplementation. These women play a pivotal and essential role in the socio-economic landscape of most Countries especially developing countries, with Cameroon being no exception.

Despite the crucial role of women entrepreneurs in the economic development of their families and countries; it is, however, discovered that women entrepreneurs have low business performance compared to their male counterparts (Akanji, 2006); and this is caused by factors which normally affect entrepreneurial performance such as lack of credit, saving, education or training, and social capital (Shane, 2003). However, microfinance programs and institutions have globally recognized as a prospective component of strategies of development organizations, governments, and societies to promote enterprises in developing countries (Hulme, 2000). They are organizations to serve the needs of un-served or underserved markets as a means of meeting development objectives (Ledgerwood, 1998). Through serving these groups, the owners of women-owned micro and small enterprises (MSEs) are expected to accumulate wealth and therefore grow after time. Specifically, microfinance institutions provide a broad range of services including deposits, loans, payment services, money transfer and insurance to the poor/low-income households and their enterprises (Chijoriga, 2000; Conford, 2001; Pilipinas, 2002). The concept of microfinance dated in 1963 with the creation of the first MFI in the northwest region to provide banking services to poor women employed in the unorganized sector in the province offering the country more than FCFA 22billion as capital, employment to over 15000 people and loan that amount to more than FCFA 138.5 billion offering worthwhile support to women and small business holder who would not be eligible for the traditional banking facilities. This initiative enabled women clients to start their enterprises or expand their businesses, increase the level of confidence and self-esteem in society. Women felt more glad, free and proud because they could notice a change in their standard of living, a change that was perceived by most to have come as a result of microcredit facilities.

Microcredit facilities are important for the growth and expansion of SMEs and their subsequent role in the national economy (Atieno, 2009). The growth and expansion of SMEs require sustained investment in working capital. However, at low levels of income, the accumulation of such capital may be difficult, more so for small women entrepreneurs. Under such circumstances, microcredit facilities may help women-owned small-scale entrepreneurs improve their incomes and accumulate own capital (Hossain, 1988; Atieno, 2001). This has seen a shift from male-dominated entrepreneurial activities to an upsurge of women entrepreneurs in recent times. Nowadays women empowerment has been increasing so rapidly all over the world and women are starting their businesses to seek greater control over their personal and professional lives. It can be seen that women entrepreneurship is a growing phenomenon and has had a significant economic impact on all economies (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2004:37). A case in point is Cameroon which is experiencing an increase in women entrepreneurship and their activities have been perceived to be a veritable vehicle for poverty reduction (Chenaa & Kimengsi, 2017). Women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to the success of the economy. They shape and redefine the workplace, business networks, financial institutions, and culture. A number of initiatives have been designed to motivate women entrepreneurs. Studies show that the experience of women in business is different from those of men. There are profound gender differences in both women's experiences of business ownership and the performance of women-owned firms (Carter, Anderson & Shaw: 2001).

Despite the crucial role of these female-owned enterprises in the socio-economic landscape in Cameroon, they face tremendous challenges. Although there are disparities among those women who carry out entrepreneurial oriented activities in Cameroon, consistent findings relating to this field shows that in general, the performance of women-owned businesses in terms of turnover, profit realization, sales volume, share capital and job creation is weaker than that found in men-owned enterprises (Chenaa & Kigmensi, 2017). Access to financial services by a small enterprise is normally seen as one of the constraints limiting their benefits from credit facilities (Johannes, Adze & Pascale, 2013). However, in most cases, the access problem, especially among formal financial institutions, is one created by the institutions mainly through their lending policies.

Previous studies suggested that raising capital is more difficult for women than men (e.g., Evans and Jovanovic, 1989; Fazzari et al., 1988, Muravyev et al., 2009). While access to finance is a challenge common to most small size enterprises (MSEs) in Cameroon, the challenge for women business owners is compounded by the multifaceted gender-related problems that inhibit their ability to access credit. Securing capital for business start-up or business operation is one of the major obstacles of every entrepreneur particularly in the SE sector but women entrepreneurs face additional constraints to secure financial resources (Muravyev et al., 2009). Women's access to credit is limited because lending offices usually require tangible collateral from borrowers. The most commonly accepted tangible form of collateral is 'land'. However, many women do not own property that can be used as collateral because gender relationships play a central role (Dowuona-Hammond, 2007). These multifaceted challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Cameroon coupled with the fact that most of them belong to very low-income groups do not permit them to get into sophisticated economic activities that require much capital which has implications for the growth and sustainability of small women-owned enterprises.

The microfinance institutions in Cameroon have exclusively served the financing needs of these women-owned SMEs; however, whether the microcredit services provided by the institution has spurred growth in the performance of women-owned SEs, especially within the Limbe municipalities of Fako Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon has not been documented. It is against this background information, which this study sought to determine the impact of microcredit services on women-owned SMEs within Limbe City. The resultant information is useful for development agencies, as well as scholars in microfinance, entrepreneurship as well as gender and development.

Though there is improved access to credit by women-owned businesses overtime in Cameroon they have continued to suffer financial challenges. For this, existing research indicates that 50% of the women-owned small businesses operate in a financial deficit and some of the businesses are still uncomfortable with such credit extended to them (Auren & Krassowska, 2004). These women-owned small businesses have registered a low return on capital employed, low net profit margin and kept a small capital size and some of them fail to run their daily operations because they cannot maintain adequate liquidity levels (Chowdhury 2002). As such, the relationship between the MFIs and women-owned small businesses keeps on deteriorating due

to failure to fulfill their loan obligations (O'Brien 2007). This could be due to the strict credit terms to include interest rates, collateral securities, and loan repayment schedules among others which seem to frustrate businesses financially.

3. Research Methodology

This section develops the methodology of the study by specifying the models, describing the variables on which data is collected; study design, sampling techniques, and the tools used to analyze data.

3.1. Model Specification and description of the variables in the model

$$BG = f(MC)$$

Transforming the model mathematically we have:

$$BG = a_0 + a_1MC$$

Where:

BG = growth of women own small business

MC = microcredit

a_0 = constant

The variables in this study are derived from the input variable which is microcredit and the output variable which is the growth of small women-owned businesses. Growth of the small business is measured in terms of improvement in the profitability, an improvement in the shared capital, an increase in the number of market shares, an increase in the number of employees, and Improvement in the market knowhow. The independent variable is measured in terms of microloans, interest rates, and collateral securities.

3.2 Study population, target population, sample size, and sampling techniques

The population of Limbe makes a total of approximately 220,000 inhabitants with organizations operating both in the formal and informal sectors. Limbe is divided into four councils which are: Limbe I, Limbe II, Limbe III, and Limbe city council. The study population will be Limited to Limbe I comprises of all registered women-owned small scale enterprises that have accessed microcredit. The numbers of registered women small businesses were 72 which constitute our study population (Delegation of Commerce Limbe, 2019). Out of those 72, just 30 of them have benefited from micro-credit and constituted, therefore, our sample size.

The sampling technique used for this study was the purposive sampling technique that was a collection of the list of all registered women small scale businesses in Limbe I and the selection from that list of those who have already benefited from the microcredit. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the enterprises which have ever benefited from microcredits. Thirty (30) of the 72 registered women own businesses found in Limbe I have benefited from micro-credit and therefore constituted the sample size for this study.

3.3. Data collection sources and instruments

3.3.1. Primary Data Source

A close-ended research Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect primary data from Small women own businesses in Limbe I. This questionnaire was drawn in line with the specific

objectives aimed at achieving the global objective. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, the first section consisted of the demographical distribution of the respondent of women small businesses in Limbe 1, the second consisted of the first specific objective of this study which is, an identification, mapping, and characteristics of women small businesses that have benefited from microcredit with close-ended questions posed, the third section consisted of the second specific objective which is, Assessing the extent to which microfinance loan has led to the expansion/growth of women own businesses with a Likert scale capturing the components of business growth and assess to microcredit, and the fourth section consisted of the third specific objective which is, Assessing the challenges faced by women small businesses with Likert scale capturing the challenges faced by women small businesses in Limbe I.

3.3.2. Secondary Data Source

The secondary source of information was collected from existing literature such as books, magazines, published articles, reports, from Small women, own businesses database, dissertation among others for this research. Secondary data are information that already exists collected by other researchers and organizations for different purposes Blumberg et al. (2008).

3.4. Data collection techniques and data analyses procedure

Ethical issues in research are concerned mainly in balancing the right of people for privacy, safety, confidentiality, and protection from deceit with the pursuit of scientific endeavor. A letter of authorization was obtained from the Dean of studies, Department of Business Management, Pan Africa Institute for Development (PAID-WA), Buea, Cameroon. It was presented to Small women own businesses in Limbe I authorities and approved before any interview. Participants were approached by interviewers who introduced themselves as research project personnel collecting data on Small women own businesses principally for academics purposes. The data collection period was for one month within the study area (1st October to 30th October).

Data analysis was done were based on the results obtained from the field with the use of questionnaires. Data obtained was, coded and analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and the findings were presented using tables. The study made use of descriptive and influential statistics in analyzing data. Descriptive with the use of tables, figures, and percentages and influential with the use of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient statistical technique was adopted.

4. Findings

4.1 Characterize the women-owned small businesses in Limbe I

This study was designed to examine the impact of microcredit on the growth of women's businesses in Limbe I, South West region, Cameroon. Table 1 provides the sample description.

Table 1: Listing, location, and typology of women own small businesses of Limbe I that have benefitted from microcredit

No	Name of the business	Type of business	Location in Limbe I
1	Yaya fashion	Designer	Down beach
2	Women dress	Designer	Down beach
3	Medi dress	Designer	Church street
4	Forever 21	Designer	Mile four
5	Carine fashion	Designer	Middle farms
6	Kadi dress	Designer	Bahi
7	Babies	Designer	Cocoanut Island
8	All dress	Designer	Cars street
9	Designer shop	Designer	Cocoanut Island
10	Percaline beauty	Saloon	Church street
11	Miranda saloon	Saloon	Mile four
12	Atlantic hair	Saloon	Cars street
13	Martin wear	Seamstress	Mile four
14	fashion for all	Seamstress	Middle farms
15	Mama Caro dress	Seamstress	Church street
16	Home boutique	Buyam salam	Cars street
17	Cocoyam seller	Buyam salam	Down beach
18	Bush market	Buyam salam	Down beach
19	Plantain dealer	Buyam salam	Bahi
20	Fresh Tomatoes sales	Buyam salam	Cocoanut Island
21	Vegetable sales	Buyam salam	Mile four
22	Chop-chop	Restaurant	Cocoanut Island
23	Hot pepper soup	Restaurant	Bahi
24	All meals	Restaurant	Down beach
25	Buckaroo	Restaurant	Mile four
26	Tasty fried rice and chicken	Restaurant	Church street
27	Cher charlotte	Restaurant	Cocoanut Island
28	John fish	Prestation of services	Cocoanut Island
29	Sharp-sharp	Prestation of services	Down beach
30	Shop carina	Prestation of services	Bahi

The women-owned small businesses of Limbe I are involved in different types of small businesses like; Saloon, with a frequency of 3(10%) of them, Seamstress, 3(10%), also designers

with a frequency of 9(30%). There are equally Buyam selam, which are 6(20%). 6 respondents are involved in Restaurant, which represents 6(20%) of the sample size and finally, 3 of them are involved in services rendering, representing 3(10%) of the number of respondents.

Table 2: Characteristics of micro and small women own businesses of Limbe I

Capital of your business	Below 150,000	150,000 to 300,000	300,000 to 500,000	500,000 to 1000,000	1000,000 to 10,000,000	10,000,000 and Above
Frequency	1	9	4	3	9	4
Percentage (%)	3%	30%	13%	10%	30%	13%
Main source of finance	Friend	Family	Owner own fund	Microfinance	Total	
Frequency	9	12	6	3	30	
Percentage (%)	30%	40%	20%	10%	100%	
Issues hindering access to microcredit	High collateral	High-interest rates	Unaware	Scared of procedure	No legal documents	Total
Frequency	9	9	4	4	4	30
Percentage (%)	30%	30%	13%	13%	13%	100%
The Person Managing your business	Business owner	A relative	A recruit	Total		
Frequency	20	7	3	30		
Percentage (%)	67%	23%	10%	100%		
Number of employees of your business	Less than 3	3 - 5	6 and Above	Total		
Frequency	14	6	10	30		
Percentage (%)	47%	20%	33%	100%		
Management skills of the business owner	Very high	High	Low	Very low	Not at all	Total
Frequency	3	7	10	7	3	30
Percentage (%)	10%	23%	33%	23%	10%	100%
Previous experience in business before embarking in this current one	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
Frequency	8	2	1	17	2	30
Percentage (%)	27%	7%	3%	57%	7%	100%
Transfer of ownership in case of death of the current owner	Exist	Still thinking	No existing	Never	Total	
Frequency	5	3	20	2	30	
Percentage (%)	17%	10%	67%	7%	100%	

The women own small businesses of Limbe I have limited capital. The table above shows that 1(3%) business has below 150.000 fcfa of capital, while 9(30%) have a capital between 150.000 fcfa and 300.000 fcfa. The table also shows that, 4(13%) businesses have a capital between 300.000 fcfa and 500.000 fcfa. That table also reveals that 3(10%) respondents have a capital of between 500.000 fcfa and 1000.000 fcfa. The majority of them constituting 9(30%) have a capital of between 1000.000 fcfa and 10.000.000 fcfa, while just 4 representing (13%) of them have a capital of 10.000.000 fcfa and above.

The women-owned micro and small businesses of Limbe I are also characterized by their source of finance. The observation of the table above reveals that 12(40%) of them raise their capital from the family assistance and help, while 9(30%) have gotten their capital from their friends and relatives. That table also shows that 6(20%) started their business with their own fund, and only 3(10%) started with loans received from a formal or informal microfinance institution.

Some issues hindering access to microcredit also appear in that table like characteristics of women own small businesses in Limbe I. Amongst others, the high collateral, with 9(30%) of the respondents, the high-interest rates, with 9(30%) of the respondents, their unaware, with 4(13%), the scared of procedure, with 4(13%) of the respondents, and the lack of legal documents, with 4(13%) of the sample size.

The Person managing the business is equally a characteristic of small businesses in Cameroon. That table shows that, 20(67%) of the small businesses in Limbe I are managed by their owner, while 7(23%) are managed by a relative and just 3(10%) by a recruit. These small businesses also have as characteristic to have a few numbers of employees. The table above shows that 14(47%) of the businesses have less than 3 employees, while 6(20%) have between 3 and 5 employees and 10(33%) of them have a number of employees between 6 and above.

The management skills of the business owner have appeared to be one of the characteristics of small businesses in Cameroon. In Limbe I, 3(10%) business owners have a very high level of management skills, while 7(23%) have a high level of management skills. However, the table also reveals that 10(33%) of them have a low level of management skills, while 7(23%) have a very low level of management skills and 3(10%) have no management skills.

The table also shows that 8(27%) of the business owners strongly agreed that, they had previous experience in business before embarking in this current one, while 2(7%) of them agreed that they such an experience. Just 1(3%) of the respondent was neutral, while 17(57%) of them disagreed that they had such as experience and 2(7%) strongly disagreed that, they had previous experience in business before embarking in this current one.

The lack of mechanism put in place of automatic transfer of ownership has equally appeared like a characteristic of small businesses in Cameroon. The table above shows that such a mechanism exists in 5(17%) businesses in Limbe I, while 3(10%) businesses are still thinking about it. It has also appeared that 20(67%) do not have a mechanism of transfer of ownership in case of the death of the current owner, while 2(7%) have never heard about such a mechanism.

4.2. Contribution of microcredit to the women-owned small businesses in Limbe I

Table 3: The extent to which microcredit has assisted in the growth of women own micro and small scale businesses in Limbe I

Business growth	Owners' Opinion									
	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%
Increase your market shares over time	3	10%	6	20%	18	60%	3	10%	0	0%
The size of your business has increase	3	10%	15	50%	12	40%	0	0%	0	0%
Improvement of the profitability of your business.	0	0%	12	40%	18	60%	0	0%	0	0%
Increase in the shared capital of your business	3	10%		0%	24	80%	0	0%	3	10%
Increase in your number of employees	3	10%	6	20%	15	50%	6	20%		0%
Increase in your number of branches	0	0%	3	10%	6	20%	18	60%	3	10%
Increase your sales volume	3	10%	9	30%	15	50%	3	10%	0	0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

From the above table, out of the 30 respondents, 3(10%) strongly agreed that there is an increase in their market shares over time, 6(20%) agreed, 18(60%) were neutral, and 3(10%) disagreed. From the above table, 3(10%) strongly agreed that the size of their business has increased, while 15(50%) agreed, and 12(40%) were neutral. That table also reveals that 12(40%) agreed that there is an improvement in the profitability of their business, while 18(60%) did not have any opinion. From the same table, 3(10%) respondents strongly agreed that there is an increase in the shared capital of their business 24(80%) are neutral and 3(10%) strongly disagreed.

That table also shows that 3(10%) of the business owners strongly agreed that there is an increase in their number of employees, while 6(20%) agreed, 15(50%) were without an opinion and 6(20%) disagreed. From the above table, out of the 30 respondents, 3(10%) agreed that there is an increase in their number of branches, while 6(20%) were neutral, 18(60%) disagree and 3(10%) strongly disagree. That table finally shows that, out of the 30 respondents, 3(10%) strongly agreed that, there is an increase in their sales volume, while 9(30%) agreed, 15(50%) were neutral and 3(10%) disagreed.

4.3. Challenges faced by the women-owned small businesses in Limbe I

From figure 1, out of the 30 respondents, 23(77%) recognized the pledge for collateral security been a problem for achieving microcredit loans, while just 7(23%) disagreed. From the figure,

out of the 30 respondents, 21, representing 70% of them agreed that they are faced with the problem of lack of marketing skills and knowledge, while just 9(30%) disagreed.

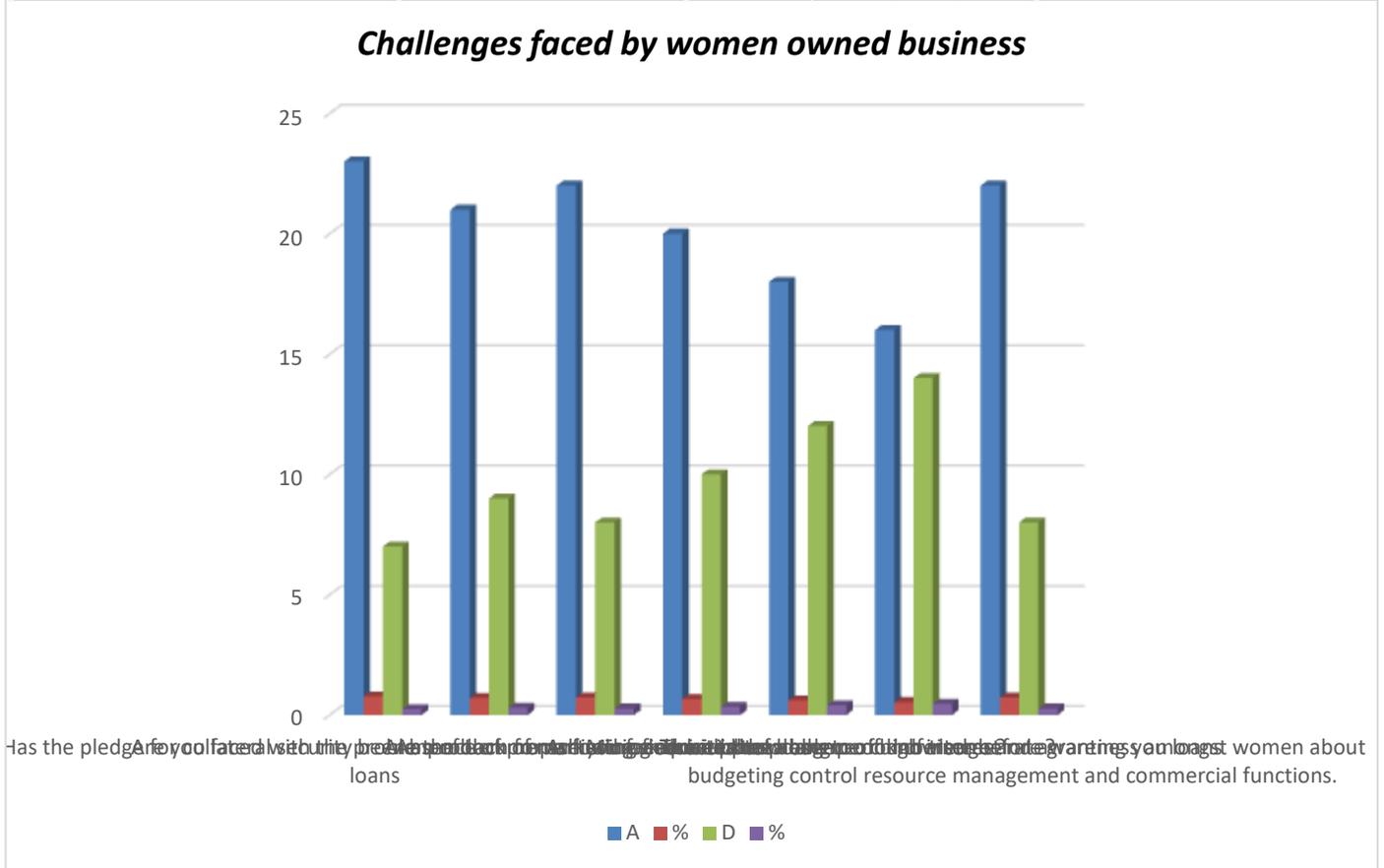


Fig.1: Challenges faced by women-owned small businesses in Limbe I

From figure 1, it has also appeared that, out of the 30 respondents, 22(73%) recognized the absence of proper training and support as a challenge, while 8, representing (27%) disagreed. From the above figure, out of the 30 respondents, 20(67%) agreed that the documents for the acquisition of loans too are too cumbersome, while, 10, representing a percentage of 33% of them disagreed. From the above figure, out of the 30 respondents, 7(23%) recognized that they are faced with the problem of high-interest rate, while up to 23(77%) of them disagreed. From that same figure, it has appeared that, out of the 30 respondents, 16(53%) agreed that, Microfinance takes a long period of time before granting their loans, which constitutes a challenge for them, while 14(47%) disagreed. From the above figure, out of the 30 respondents, 22(73%) agreed that knowledge and awareness are absent amongst women about budgeting control resource management and commercial functions which appears to be a great challenge for them, while 8(27%) disagreed.

4.4. Impact of microcredit on the growth of women own micro and small businesses

There is no significant impact of microcredit on the growth of women-owned micro and small businesses in Limbe I. Multiple regression statistical technique was used to test this hypothesis. The result is as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression result of the impact of microcredit on business growth**Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	22,431	2,029		11,055	,000
	ML	11,231	1,211		6,22	.000
	IS	11,101	1,021		501	.000
	Microcredit	,207	,213	,180	,969	,341

R² = .15Adj. R² = .12

F= 12.85

a. Dependent Variable: growth

The result in Table 4 revealed an R² (the coefficient of multiple determinants) values of .15. This means that about 15 percent of changes in business growth is caused by access to microloans and insurance. The adjusted R² value of .12 implied that the model is 12% goodness fit. The F-value of 12.85 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance. It implies that there exists a low relationship between microcredit and business growth in Limbe I. The estimated coefficient for microloans (ML), and insurance (IS) are all positive. This means that there exists a direct relationship between these variables and business growth. These results are in order with economic a priori criteria and are significant at 5 percent and 10 percent levels of significance.

6. Discussions

Findings from research objective one revealed that the characteristics of women small businesses of Limbe I include their low level of capital, the source of their capital that is generally, from the owner's own fund or a relative, a lot of difficulties to get access to a microcredit due to the lack of collateral, the high-interest rate, the lack of information of the owners, the scared of procedures, the lack of legal documents. The findings also revealed that those businesses are usually managed by their owner who generally lack management skills and don't have any previous experience in business before embarking in this current one. These businesses don't have any mechanism put in place for the automatic transfer of ownership in case of the death of the current owner. These businesses are also characterized by their few numbers of employees. These findings are in line with the findings of Harper (1992) which revealed that women and their economic activities fall in the sole proprietorship type of business, meaning that they are generally managed by the women owners themselves.

Findings from specific objective two revealed that microcredit does not have a significant impact on the expansion of women small businesses in Limbe I, not up to 20% strongly agreed or agreed. These findings are in accordance with the findings of Ledgerwood (1999), which revealed that microfinance institutions (MFIs) instead of facilitating the expansion of the Women-owned Small Businesses is hindering their expansion.

Findings from research objective three revealed that one of the main challenges faced by women-owned small businesses in Limbe I is difficult to access to loans. This finding is in line with the finding of Cuevas et al. (1993) which indicates that access to microcredit by women-owned small businesses has been an issue repeatedly raised by numerous studies as a major constraint to business growth, mainly due to their inability to pledge acceptable collateral.

The findings from objective three are equally in line with the findings of Ali S.A, (2015) in his study, listed as; the lacks of marketing skills, the absence of proper technical training and support, the very high-interest rate, the shortage in the innovation and availability, the fear of women to take responsibility of business frustrates women to get rid of Microfinance idea and finally no enough knowledge or awareness among women about resource management.

7. Conclusion

This research aimed at examining the impact of microcredit on the growth of women-owned micro and small businesses in Limbe I. This is because the women-owned small businesses have been experiencing stagnation and collapse of their businesses in the last years in the whole of Cameroon and specifically in Limbe I. According to the assumptions having at the beginning of this research, this lack of growth among women-owned small businesses in Cameroon and specifically in Limbe I was because of the difficult access to microcredit. After investigation, the researcher can conclude that there is a very low impact of microcredit on the growth of women own small businesses in Cameroon and specifically in Limbe I. It was found that, access to microcredit always appears like important challenges for these small businesses, even if its impact on the growth of these businesses is still reduced. Others factors are very important for the growth of these small businesses as it was found in this research; the capital of the business, the level of education of the owner, the person managing the business, the skills of the owner in business management, in marketing and accountancy are few. Therefore, the reasons for the stagnation of women's small businesses in the whole of Cameroon and specifically in Limbe I must be found in other factors as earlier mentioned.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations deem useful for the improvement of the women-owned small businesses in Limber I.

- Women entrepreneurs in starting up their businesses should request for microcredit loans added to the part of the capital they acquire from their own fund and the amount of money received from their family members and friends.
- The women own businesses of Limbe I should unite themselves by creating an association on which to debate about their challenges, such that the MFIs should reduce the interest rate and in such a way that each of the members in the association can act as collateral to one another.
- The delegation of small and medium-sized enterprises should organize training programs to enable the women entrepreneurs to develop their skills in business management, marketing, and accountancy.

- The business owners should recruit managers having skills in management to carry out the various activities of their business.
- The women entrepreneurs should put in place a mechanism of transfer of ownership before death to ensure the survival of the business in their absence.
- The women own small businesses should look at other factors that can lead to the growth of their business and not to focus only on microcredit in financing their businesses.
- The microfinance institutions should reduce their documents to facilitate the acquisition of loans by the women entrepreneurs.
- The microfinance institutions should reduce the time in giving out loans to women entrepreneurs.

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