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Millennial Generations and Social Entrepreneurial Engagements: Exploring the Influence of Political Environment in Imo State

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the role of millennials and their engagement with social entrepreneurial institutions in promoting community development in Imo State, Nigeria .The survey was conducted amongst 303 millennials randomly selected across the three senatorial zones of Okigwe, Orlu, and Owerri in Imo State. The study utilized the qualitative Focus Group Discussion and Key In-depth Interview instruments to elicit data from the respondents. Findings show that respondents are highly technology savvy which they constantly leverage to build social entrepreneurial ventures and in turn address key development challenges of their families and communities. It was also revealed that while the use of information technology has improved entrepreneurial advancement and improvements in the socio-economic status of millennials, it has also negatively impacted them by way of proliferation of cyber criminality. The study hence concluded that millennials should focus their energies on changing the socioeconomic position of their households through positive appropriation of the wide social entrepreneurial opportunities that can guarantee their access to power and economic resources that would bridge the exiting structural inequality challenging their growth and development. The study recommends that millennial generations must put concerted efforts to become technologically relevant to the changing development concerns in their communities and by so strengthen their relationships with the basic social institutions in order to address the inequity and support good digital local governance within the community level.
Keywords: Millennial Generations, Social Entrepreneurship, Technology, Imo State

INTRODUCTION

The Millennials are an on-demand instant-gratification generation that has become emboldened by technology and molded by world events (Haber, 2016). Social entrepreneurship is defined as the commercial activity of private actors to achieve social or public goals alongside commercial profit (Wolk, 2008). Social enterprise is an improved policy support for acceleration of solutions to social problems. This is done by creating cost-effective ways for government to address inequalities produced by market failures, and traditional function of government alongside providing public goods.

Terjesen, Bosma, and Stam (2015) noted that social entrepreneurs typically rely on modest, often self-funded capital, and their ventures are more likely to survive when the social entrepreneurs have experience in previous self-initiated efforts. They emphasized that institutional factors, such as prescriptive norms, cultural beliefs, and regulatory activity, affect these entrepreneurs most,

with policies that promote and reward pro-social behaviors proving the most impactful in positively influencing rates and success of social entrepreneurship. In the light of the above, this paper examines the millennial generations and social entrepreneurial engagements with a lens of observing the interplay of the political environment of Imo state to their community development engagement.

Studies on social entrepreneurship have been linked to three developmental needs. Firstly, the growing interest to solve social issues through effective, innovative and sustainable solutions to deal with the complexity of social problems (Johnson, 2000; Alvord *et al*., 2002; Santos, 2009) affecting the health of most modern societies (Thompson *et al*., 2000) such as unemployment, inequalities in the access to health care and social services (Catford, 1998), squalor, poverty, crime, privation or social exclusion (Blackburn & Ram, 2006). Secondly, the rising concern on the growing range of service areas not addressed by the public sector, but where conditions are not attractive enough to attract the private sector (Darby & Jenkins, 2006). Thirdly, a growing appreciation among business or commercial entrepreneurs and their involvement in social sector with the purpose to enhance social wealth globally (Zahra *et al*., 2008) and as a way of creating community wealth (Wallace, 1999). As a result, social enterprise activities exist in space where public, private and voluntary overlap (Perrini & Vurro, 2006).

This study therefore relies on the first assumptions to contextualize social enterprise as a non-profit collective of millennials seeking to grow interest to solve social issues through effective, innovative and sustainable solutions by their techno savvy orientation in order to deal with the complexity of social problems (Johnson, 2000; Alvord *et al*., 2002; Santos, 2009) affecting the health of their communities as opined by Thompson *et al*., (2000) and by extension mitigate on the multiple effects of unemployment, inequalities in their access to social services and power relations (Catford, 1998), as well as change their social status characterized by their relations to squalor settlements, poverty, crime, privation or social exclusion (Blackburn & Ram, 2006).

Extant studies on social entrepreneurship in Imo State Nigeria such as Okoli, Anyaegbunam, Etuk, Opara et al,(2005)focused on youths and social entrepreneurship, while Ihugba, Odii & Njoku (2013) examined entrepreneurial characteristics and challenges of entrepreneurship in Imo state, Nigeria. Halkias, Nwajiuba, Harkiolakis, Caracatsanis, (2011) studied "challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Nigeria". Similarly, Iwueke and Nwaiwu (2014) and Aririguzo (2015) observed the emerging perspectives on social entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Imo state. From the above it would surmise none of the existing studies have observed the social relations of the millennials in social entrepreneurial development in Imo state, hence the gap that this study fills. The limitations in observing the impact of the millennials and social entrepreneurial engagement amidst the prevailing value system and the political economic environment of the state, one would surmise that the millennials are confronted with several institutional challenges erupting and sustaining inequality and poverty of ideas and opportunities amongst these global age groupings changing the world with their techno savvy potentials. The implications of the above are cynical on increasing spate of their indulgence in crimes, substance abuse, terrorism, kidnapping, cyber criminality and overall insecurity shredding the unity, peace and stability of the Nigerian nation apart.

This study leverages on the findings of Nicholls (2006), and Shaw et al. (2013) who found that digitally-influenced changes in the motives of the youths towards political, economic and environmental issues is gradually increasing in order to reduce the uneven distribution of the wealth around the world. Also Haber, (2016) observed that social entrepreneurship appeals for young generations, who change both the business and social entrepreneurship landscapes to examine how millennials' in selected communities of Imo state have been able to synergize their generational values towards changing the socioeconomic platforms of their communities. This informs the motivation for this study; hence the study examines millennial generations and their social entrepreneurship engagements.

Theoretical Framework

The study relied on the Generational Social Capital Theory and its application was relevant to examine the interactions between the millennials and sustainable community development because it examined the analytical strength of the generational theory by Howe and Strauss and the Social capital theoretical approaches in line with the thesis of the study. Ryder (1965) defined generations as aggregates of individuals who could be viewed as independent variables placed within other population parameters, such as geographical location, education, and race in social change. Ryder (1965) criticized Strauss and Howe for not been detailed in their assumptions on generational theory. Morris Massey (1970) was another influencer who identified the so-called Baby Boomers as the generation born immediately after WWII. He argued that our behaviours are driven by our value system and generational groups are likely to share value systems. Therefore people within a generation are more likely to share what Massey called "value programming," and consequently "value systems." In contrast, different generation cohorts are more likely to be at odds as they have different "value programming." In short, Massey argued that values can be generalized based on generations.

Howe and Strauss (2009) discussed the sociological characteristics of millennials as critical to any policy discussion concerning social enterprise: they value working from home, ask for financial help when they need it, and are less concerned about formal paid employment than previous generations. Despite expectations that millennials would be an especially entrepreneurial generation, mounting evidence has indicated that they may be less involved in entrepreneurship than those in previous cohorts, with millennials less interested than their parents' generation in owning their own businesses or being self-employed (Eagan, Lozano, Hurtado, and Case, 2013; Shane, 2014). While social entrepreneurship gains prominence as a tool in solving public problems, millennials are decreasingly engaging in it. This dynamic both suggests that social enterprises will miss the unique talents, perspective, and digital nativity of this cohort, and this cohort will miss the professional opportunities of an expanding market. In a time of continuing social welfare retrenchment, the entrepreneurial contributions of a rising millennial generation to social wellbeing may be especially missed, as will their potential influence on social policy.

Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams approach serves as a helpful method of examining the problems, prospects, and implications for policy and practice present in the current dearth of millennial involvement in social enterprises. In Kingdon's problems stream, potential areas for policy intervention compete against one another, ready to be reframed or recognized as problems requiring policy action; problem recognition can be aided by perceptions of the situation as a crisis or by the handy availability of a potential solution. Solutions are already available, floating around, ready to attach themselves to problems that must first get attention; solutions go in search of problems. Using the Kingdon (1995) model, McMillin, Lee and Naeger (2016) examines potential problems, policy proposals, and political climates regarding social entrepreneurship and members of the millennial generation. Kingdon (1995) suggests that the problem stream identifies problems for policy intervention in three possible ways. First, are they current and clear "problems of the day" that are commonly agreed on as part of existing social conditions? Second, are they national or crisis events that reframe previously ignored or unnoticed social conditions as pressing public concerns? Third, are there changing social values and beliefs that give problems new notice, thereby attracting the interest of policy advocates seeking to craft responses to the changing status quo? It is likely that low millennial involvement in social entrepreneurship is only beginning to emerge as a public concern, as evidenced by relatively small and only recent attention to the issue (Nickelsburg, 2013; Schawbel, 2014; Shane, 2014).

The above scenario is peculiar with the political environment in Imo state as earlier mentioned. However, the low involvement in social entrepreneurship by millennials is commonly tied to other, more prominent, social problems affecting the millennial generation. Tobak's (2011) critique points to Kingdon's third source for problem identification, changing social values and beliefs about a given problem. He argues that for all the attention given to the idea that

millennials are more socially engaged than previous demographic cohorts, as well as more interested in entrepreneurship; the social focus of many millennial entrepreneurs may be significantly misaligned with the consumer priorities of other demographic cohorts. Specifically, baby boomers and generation X-ers, who have the income to become lucrative customers for millennial social entrepreneurs, may not want what millennials are selling. The above point by Tobak specifically captures the prevailing social relations between the millennials and the power structures that are interfering with their capabilities to enforce change in the socioeconomic relations of communities in Imo state, Nigeria. Looking at evidence of the poverty and unemployment index of the Nigeria state amidst the proven utility of millennials techno savvy for entrepreneurial development in Imo state, one would surmise that the millennials are unequally placed in the power relations to actualize the desired development of communities in Nigeria.

The social capital theorists on the other hand, pose a critical and complex interrogation on how millennial generations' skills interact with community development. Social capital refers to individual or collective asset that can be mobilized through social relations (Coleman, 1990; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000). At least two expectations from the concept are shared. First, social capital works through a third way of thinking facilitated by new political economic circumstances (Boggs, 2002; Fine, 2001; Jessop, 1994; Stokke, 2002; Yan, 2004). A general assumption is that social capital as voluntary civic associations and decentralized institutions will fill in gaps left by the State in fulfilling its responsibilities on human capital development, and further become a prime site of policy and practice for locality governance and development (Putnam, 1993, 2000). Second, social capital is expected to facilitate bottom-up (community/individual based) organizing that may reduce the problems in social exclusion and inequalities (Cohen, 2001; Collier, 2002; Isham, 2002; Saegert, Thompson, & Warren, 2001). In particular, persons in high poverty neighborhoods confront interrelated barriers that stem not only from economic deprivation but also from a cumulative process of isolation and disadvantage in society (Delgado, 2000; Jargowsky 1997; Wilson 1987). Yet social capital rebuilds community-based activism and helps the poor overcome their weakened ability to participate fully in a social life.

In that sense, social capital is an asset that improves people's capacity to mobilize collective action. (Cohen, 2001; McClenaghan, 2000). Yet the utility of social capital suffers from several theoretical controversies. One of the biggest threats to social capital theory is the question of analytic unit, which inevitably becomes a sociological concern of power differences in a community (Field, 2003; Fried, 2002; Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 2001). The implication of the above statement is contextualized to depict that power difference in community between the millennial generations has not been productive due to their poor access to appropriate talents and skills in solving community needs. The above conceptual reviews gave fillip to the establishment of the grounded theoretical model "Generational Social Capital Theory".

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted amongst 303 purposively selected respondents in which 288 focus group discussants and 15 interviewees were all drawn from 3 communities each in the Senatorial clusters of Okigwe, Orlu and Owerri, culminating into 12 communities namely: Amawom, Umuoyima, Emekuku, Umuguma, Ugwuaku, Umuololo, Arondiizogu, Isinweke, Asa-Obile, Awara, Obosima, Umuapu and representative of the senatorial zones in Imo State.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample for the Study

Local Government Area	Communities	Sampled number
Ohaji/Egbema	Asa-Obile Umuapu Obosima Awara	24 24 24+5 24
Okigwe	Ugwuaku Isiala Mbano Umuololo Onuimo	24 24 24+5 24
Owerri	Emekuku Umuguma Amawom Umuoyima	24 24 24+5 24
Total	**12**	**288+15=303**

Data collection involved the application of Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The interview guide helped elicit first-hand information on the millennials' lived experiences. Data analysis involved the use of qualitative thematic analysis of responses grounded in the data obtained from the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from the study revealed that there is a surge in the use of information communications technology and social media platforms amongst millennials in the study area. A respondent highlighting this situation noted thus:

"The invention of telecommunication in our era has really helped the development of skills and ideas for economic and income generation such as the telecommunication business and current mobile and electronic banking platforms FGD Female 26years Owerri"

The study also revealed that most female millennials in their bid to expand their economic value have engaged in several small online businesses or rather utilized their social media suaveness to expand their household income and sustenance. This as reported by some discussant below:

"the craving classic lifestyles of today has offered us opportunities such that we now can pride ourselves as "Small girls with Big Gods" after all" Na dem dey rush us" the use of phones avails us a lot of opportunities to electronically market products and reach out to wide range of clienteles"

A ladies life without the use of smart phone nowadays na error….With the phone one can market his or her skills for the globe or network of friends and families to patronize your initiative or business ventures" You can quote me wrong ooo! But the truth remains that majority of the patronages most female entrepreneurs have are social media friends who though patronize us for an exchange of friendship or otherwise FGD/ Female/32years/Owerri.

Data on impact of political environment on millennials' innovation in Imo State found that most millennials have exceeded the innovative scale of their predecessors looking at the growing wave of ingenuity that online access has granted millennial community to advance their socioeconomic status. Data from some discussants supports the above:

A popular Igbo axiom has it that "a big butt woman is never told that conflict has erupted in a market place" This goes to explain the fact that with the current economic tide of the Nigerian state where the rich continue to grow rich and the poor continue to go poorer, one needs to shine his head in order to survive hence the access to smart phone, data and array of information

through the social media proposes multiple opportunities that shouldn't be ignored. KII/28.11.2018/Male/31years/Okigwe"

I have come to realize that the economic challenges of our present Nigeria have propelled most of my mates to be look inward on their abilities and trials of some aspect of livelihood income ventures rather than placing high hopes white collar jobs or elephant dreams FGD/ 27.11.2018/Female/ Ohaji/37years.

This current administration no help us at all…! we were left us with no choice than to source for alternative livelihood. Nwanne, there are several ways to make money and all involves risks which one has to deal with KII/Female/26years/ Ohaji.

In order to break the jinx of poverty nwanne you must have to take the extraordinary task to join the league of men else, na Owu (poverty) go dey flog u steady KII/Male/ 29years/Owerri"

Bro make I tell you, all these politicians wey don make am na risk wey dem take ooo! Therefore, I have always encouraged my mates to brazen up in their hussle and open up to risk taking to make money….. If we no make money wetin we gain for this world?FGD/female/29years

Owerri na town wey be say if your huzzle no make you get money brother think about an alternative and the only way to romance with the thick and tanks of this society na tru reinforcing your struggles and networks of income through business e no matter wetin e be provided you code your package FGD/Male/33years/Owerri

To dey come out every morning come see your mates wey dey ride mobs, build houses, club and own businesses and connections that keeps them financially okay is one painful omen that one cannot bear with so any business link that would yield income is best taking the risk for it.. As a woman we transact business in different ways and are left with no choice than to use our influence to make way KII/ female/ 28years/ Okigwe.

Nwanne I ma ihe anyi na aru….As a-big u have to devise and redesign several means to make your daily bread and the moment u don harmer your name go fly sotee say u go even dey carry escort and top politicians go dey invite you for their party KII/27.11.2018/Male/36years/Owerri.

Data also revealed that the political environment of Imo state have had severe impact on social economy (diversity of enterprises, social clubs, progressive unions and) of millennials in Imo state.

"Our government dey mean! see how it have dislocated and impoverished most young entrepreneurs by it rescue mission program which destroyed our source of livelihood and nearly forced us to hopelessness and criminality as alternative to livelihood? Thank to God for life and for support from social networks that have reduced the impact of this shock FGD/Male/ 28years/Okigwe".

"One great challenge we face is the uncertainty that government policies presents to us" in the light of these uncertainties such as the current rescue policy that never integrated the youths into its plan of actions until lately FGD/ Female 24years/ Awara.

Today, most young entrepreneurs are left with no choice than to experiment and randomize their lucks with multiple ventures in order to make ends meet. This attempt comes with its challenges to obtain a start-up capital or to get a link through which one can start up a business owing to the

current norm of corruption, fraud and disbelief and mistrust which continue to serve as a barrier to even borrow money or gain support from family and friends FGD Male/ 34years/Umuololo"

From the above that, it was revealed that the political environment of Imo state on the social economy (diversity of enterprises, social clubs, progressive unions and) of millennials is at threat of several institutional barriers and mistrust arising from the policy thrust of the government which does not guarantee confidence of the young entrepreneurs to assist their fellow entrepreneurs due to uncertainties of recovery funds or aids given out to boost or alleviate entrepreneurial engagement or challenges of their fellow entrepreneurs. This show a link that the political environment of governance has a great impact on the growth and development of social entrepreneurial advancement of millennials in Imo state

Impact of political environment on millennials knowledge and initiatives

"the social media has been inundated with several platforms that motivate most young people into online dating, cult group identities, prostitution, and illicit interactions which expose the communities to insecurity of different levels FGD/23.11.2018/ Female/ 32 years/ Emekuku".

Another discussant added that:

"Last year, a friend of mine loss his savings to online dating scam and risked losing his life as well FGD/23.11.2018/ Male/ 34 years/ Umuoyima".

In support of the above another discussant added that:

"Most millennial today are fast oblivious of the power they possess to impact on their communities development programs hence they are often found joining the band wagon group of online prostitutes and cultist as a result of the negative appropriation of motives for social media use" KII/28.11.2018/female/29years Ohaji.

Findings also showed that most millennials are constrained by economic and social forces of the development in Imo state to exploit their knowledge resources. These forces emerge from prevailing norms of social lifestyles popularly tagged as "ngwori" or "origo" which have become a cultural identity that the younger generations are emulating in their dealings due to presence of hotels, motels and social clubs that are widely patronized by the political class, their networks and families, most millennials are emulating the values of these networks as a standard for living despite its outcomes. For example, a kinsman (young guy) in my community who made fortunes from the sales of his inherited landed property was influenced to believe he has arrived and went on to join the bandwagon, squandered the proceeds of about 10 million and is broke to the point that he is koboless due to the effect of Owerri political influence that gave him and unconscious believe that he is rich and could spend without checks.

Owerri has turned into wildlife game reserve where people come with different business proposal and ideas and sometimes have a sheep clothing from the government as Non- Governmental Organizations or Community-Based Organizations that are to support the growth of skills and initiatives of young business starters only to end up with mischievous exploitations that envelops the little income of these young entrepreneurs. These are some of the fears why the indifference in the use of electronic banking platforms to transact business in still prevalent in most communities in Imo state.

Drawing from the foregoing, the study established that some millennial generations in the communities have continually appropriate their energies as young entrepreneurs to train themselves, build networks of supports, increase their socioeconomic value in community development programs. This notwithstanding, the study also revealed that by implication sexual and financial gratifications are factors motivating most millennial generations engagement with small scale entrepreneurial opportunities to help change their socioeconomic status and to help build the financial capital. Data also found that the political environment of Owerri and most communities in Imo state where social clubs and joints are influencing the value system and

exerting strong influence on the millennials' inability to exploit their knowledge and initiative for economic advancement. The implication of the above is cynical to the reasons why most millennials are arrogantly involved in thuggery, unlawful and illicit tax collections from businesses and market places, in order to meet up with the demands arising from value system of the state. In Owerri specifically, data showed that the political environment of have created a new norm of corruption and indecency on the social fabrics of the state which promotes the use of social media for dishonest income derivation such that everyone wants to outsmart each other and by so many have fallen victims to entrepreneurial investments and have been defrauded of their capital to sustain through their business.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that evidences from the links between millennials and entrepreneurial development in Imo state is yet to be fully appropriated for community development. To achieve the sustainability of their entrepreneurial engagements there is need to strengthen their relationships with the basic social institutions in order to address the inequity and support good digital governance within the community level. The study hence concluded that millennials should focus their energies in changing the socioeconomic position of their households through positive appropriation of the wide social entrepreneurial opportunities that their suaveness has guaranteed them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Millennial generations must put concerted efforts to become technologically relevant to the changing development concerns in their communities. There is need to sensitize them on how they can improve their digital inclinations for entrepreneurial expansion and relationships that would address their financial inequity within the community level. The deficits within the cultural context which has a strong influence on individual and community norms must be addressed in order to strengthen millennial engagement with entrepreneurial online behaviors of millennial generations and community development challenges.

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