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Gendered Entrepreneurship and Copreneurial Success: Investigating Traditional Gender Norms in South West Nigeria's Informal Economy

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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the effects of traditional gender roles on copreneurial success in the informal economy in South West Nigeria. The research uses Gender Role Theory to examine how these entrenched socio-cultural beliefs influence role complementarity, decision-making processes, access to resources, and overall business performance by entrepreneurial couples. The study used a descriptive correlational research design and analysed data from 400 copreneurs across 5 urban locations. Analysis from regression and correlation modes of analysis suggested that gender roles, patriarchal beliefs and male-dominated economic structures both impact and prevent copreneurial success. Traditional gender roles were found to be the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial success highlighting the power of traditional gender roles in defining authority, to reinforce recognition and mobilization of reserves in co-owned enterprises. Although many of the respondents stated that they coordinated their decision-making and divided roles equally, the majority of respondents still reported disempowerment based on unequal cultural expectations. Ultimately, the research calls for gender responsive policy interventions that will account for the actors operating in the informal economy, and leave room for equal forms of entrepreneurship that are beneficial to livelihoods. This research contributes to the discussion of entrepreneurship by focusing more on lived experiences and advocating for change at the structural level to achieve equal forms of participation in informal economies.

KEYWORDS: copreneurship, gender norms, informal economy, South West Nigeria, entrepreneurial equality.

INTRODUCTION

Gendered entrepreneurship within copreneurial contexts has become an important framework for understanding how gender politics influence enterprise outcomes. The informal economy in South West Nigeria is deeply affected by customs which is grounded in traditional ideas about gender roles, expectations, and household work (Nwachukwu et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2024). In South West Nigeria, where a significant portion of livelihood exists in the informal economy, entrepreneurial activity occurs within traditional gender imagination. The concept of copreneurship, which is joint ownership of a business by intimate partners, is an emerging entrepreneurial form in the region, but its potential is often constrained by sociocultural barriers and patriarchal values that delineate access, leadership, and, recognition (Peter & Orser, 2024; Aladejebi, 2020).

In the informal economy in South West Nigeria, a number of institutions grounded in flexibility, markets, apprenticeship pathways, and community-based trading systems are critically here. Community institutions that structure the informal economy also reproduce gendered hierarchies. For instance, cultural norms that support male privileges in businesses often allow that male partner to occupy financial and strategic decision-making roles, even when both partners are owners of the business (Chinonso et al., 2024; Jurik et al., 2019). As articulated by Franco & Piceti (2018) copreneurial businesses reproduce (but do not always challenge) power imbalances at home, which often lead to differences in and operational control of business and hardship in securing the credibility to access credit.

Recent research emphasizes both the distinctive contributions of women to the sustain the informal enterprise and the limitations brought by structures. Typically, women-owned businesses do not enjoy access to formal financial systems and therefore may utilize informal finance mechanisms to substitute formal finance means, such as rotating savings groups. While critical to supporting women's entrepreneurial activity, informal lending models limit both scaling opportunities and independence (Peter & Orser, 2024; Tahir et al., 2022; Nwachukwu et al., 2021). These limitations involve economic concerns but are interwoven with structures of gendered expectations for leadership, risk-taking, and visibility within leisure settings (Costenbader et al., 2024).

Traditional forms of apprenticeships such as Igba Boyi, while still effective in transferring skills, remain substantially gender impermeable. Specifically, male apprentices are usually favored or have greater access to succession and training, continuing to target women away from positions of influence (Chinonso et al., 2024; Aladejebi, 2020; Silva et al., 2024). This begs critical questions about who these culturally bounded systems serve and how they shape a gendered trajectory among entrepreneurs.

Moreover, timely academic and policy conversations continue to highlight gender diversity as a strong contributor to innovation, resilience, and sustainability in business partnerships (Dlouhá et al., 2014; Jurik et al., 2019). Yet in South West Nigeria, where formal systems are couched in traditional ideologies, scholarly treatment of co-entrepreneurial networks where women lead or co-manage remain under theorized. Important initiatives such as those elucidated by Akanji (2016) and Igiebor (2023) argue for the need to understand how financial, institutional, and normative inequalities out variants, limit or enable joint business ventures.

As a result of the dynamic demographics of the region and the tenuousness of informal businesses, a copreneurial business will rely on (1) not only an economic focus, but (2) the capacity of couples to negotiate or resist gendered circumstances (Peter & Orser, 2024; Aladejebi, 2020). Therefore, this study examines how these gender norms shape entrepreneurial roles, responsibilities, and outcomes as copreneurs who co-own businesses located in the informal economy of South West Nigeria. The purpose of this study is to add to the literature pertaining to inclusive entrepreneurship by identifying the cultural and structural conditions that inhibit and/or enhance the success of copreneurs.

By focusing on the voices and strategies of entrepreneurial couples in this vexing context, this study aspires to affect policies and practices that tell local, gender equitable economic development in informal contexts in Africa.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Entrepreneurship in developing economies like Nigeria is often promoted as a route out of poverty and a means of economic mobility. Yet, one must be mindful that access to entrepreneurial opportunities in South West Nigeria's informal economy are not equal, nor are they gender neutral. Nwachukwu et al. (2021) stress that social institutions based on gender are still relevant to decisions about who starts business and if they start business. Cultural norms reflect that leadership and control of financial resources are largely viewed as a male responsibility, while women remain invisible or second to men in business context (Aina, 2020; Peter & Orser, 2024). These behaviours have been reaffirmed by a variety of public policies to promote women's participation in economic activities (Tahir et al, 2022).

The practice of copreneurship is on the rise as partners work collaboratively on small businesses. However, it doesn't guarantee similarities in decision making and access to resources. Chinonso et al. (2024) reported that women in copreneurship experiences often took on domestic duties and had no say on strategic issues. Revisiting Silva et al. (2024) confirms that gendered social norms still affect business responsibilities and recognition. Mostly, women are silent partners and men are the identified business owner (Aladejebi, 2020).

There are emerging copreneurial businesses, but research on gender and copreneurship remains limited. Development programs are often undertaken assuming that entrepreneurship is the same for all, not considering that socio-cultural assumptions will shape what entrepreneurship will look like (Mensah, 2022). There is often a disconnect between policies that ignore informal institutions that constrain women's participation in business processes such as capital, mentorship, and decision-making opportunities (Adeoye, 2021; Igwe et al., 2018).

Worse yet are indigenous institutions, like the Igba Boyi apprenticeship system, of which traditional knowledge transfers skills for entrepreneurship but institutionalize the male protégé. Both Chinonso et al. (2024) and Silva et al., (2024) emphasize the limitations women engage which negates progression in their entrepreneurial pathway for the future.

This study fills an urgent gap of the intersection between copreneurship and traditional gender norms. It seeks to examine how traditional gender norms effect decision making, division of labour access to resources, and business performance. The objective is to provide tools for a more gendered conceptualization of gender to support entrepreneurial partnerships in Nigeria's informal economy.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To understand the extent of how entrenched social structures shape business conduct in informal economies, this research will explore the intersection of the traditional gender norms and the copreneurial outcomes in South West Nigeria. Using the practice of everyday entrepreneurs as a reference, a combination of the following objectives will inform the research investigation in South West Nigeria:

1. To examine how prescriptive gender role expectations influence role complementarity between copreneurs in informal enterprises;

2. To investigate how patriarchal cultural norms influence symmetry or asymmetry of decision-making within copreneurs;
3. To understand how male economic domination shapes the performance outcomes of enterprises in South West Nigeria; and
4. To evaluate how traditional gender norms seem to collectively shape the incidence and outcomes of copreneurial success of entrepreneurial couples in South West Nigeria's informal economy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do gender role expectations impact complementarity between partners within informal enterprises?
2. How do patriarchal cultural ideas shape dominant decision making in copreneurial businesses?
3. What influence do male dominant economic environments have on the business performance outcomes in copreneurial businesses in South West Nigeria?
4. How do traditional gender norms collectively impact the success patterns and outcomes of copreneurial businesses in the informal economy of South West Nigeria?

Hypotheses

H_{01}: Gender role expectations are not significantly related to role complementarity between partners in informal enterprises.
H_{02}: The influence of patriarchal cultural beliefs on decision-making balance in a copreneurial context is not significant.
H_{03}: Male dominated economic structures do not exert a significant influence on business performance outcomes in copreneurial enterprises in the South West of Nigeria.
H_{04}: Traditional gender norms do not have a significant collective influence on the success patterns and outcomes of copreneurial enterprises in the informal economy of South West Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Role Theory provides an insightful perspective on how traditional expectations around masculinity and femininity continue to shape opportunities to gain power, access resources, and assume responsibilities in entrepreneurial contexts. In particular, Gender Role Theory argues that roles are social constructions, and that constructed roles assign expectations of behaviours to men and women, which, in turn, influence power relations and patterns of economic engagement. In the informal economy of South West Nigeria, the clear distinctions in gendered expectations of behaviour and authority are often manifested in copreneurial enterprises. These enterprises are often characterised by important gender-neutral facets of shared ownership; however, decisions are frequently dominated by one male partner. Situating our findings within this existing research adds to the empirical justification of Gender Plan Theory. Adebisi and Ayodele (2023) described these informal financial systems of support in South West Nigeria. Since men exclude women from credit access through formal systems, female entrepreneurs continue to depend on informal ones, such as rotating savings associations. Despite these short-term financial supports, informal financial systems easily discourage business scale and reinforce dependency structures of business resources, particularly within shared businesses. Therefore, our findings align closely with the proposed limitations of the theory, in which the dependence on financial autonomy is culturally bounded. Beyond the lack of access to financial means, traditional apprenticeship systems have entrenched and further solidified male-oriented practices of entrepreneurial approaches. Adamu and Lloyd Mpi (2019) analysed the Nwaboi Apprenticeship model, illustrating that apprenticeship systems disproportionately favour male apprentices, which reinforces patriarchal control in informal traded economies. Importantly, Akinleye (2019) argued that whilst the model may encourage skills transfer to the next cohort of entrepreneurial leaders, female entrepreneurs are excluded from effectively and meaningfully participating in not only the decision-making process but also the process of succession. This contributes to the perpetuation of encumbered intergenerational enterprise control for women.

McAdam and Marlow (2013) show, through their study of copreneurship, how power asymmetries exist in a joint venture. They found that men disproportionately exercise control over strategic functions of a business whereas women perform operational functions, and that this division of work is predicated on normative gender scripts rather than ability or effort. Similarly, Best et al. (2024) suggest that access to social capital is also gendered; men are able to leverage more hierarchical, influential networks and women are limited to relational ties that have no economic leverage.

These patterns can be augmented in institutional settings that lack gender-sensitive safeguards. Boudreaux and Nikolaev (2018) argue that these gendered effects are exacerbated in weak institutional environments, such as in informal economies, where traditional gender norms will play a larger role in entrepreneurs' business outcomes. The lack of policy protections in such spaces permits cultural norms to dictate how played are defined and played out

While the literature does provide value by examining gendered entrepreneurship, themes do not cohere into a singular framework. There is limited examination of how traditional gender norms across apprenticeship, finance and spousal business partnerships all coalesce to shape copreneurial outcomes in South West Nigeria. The current study examines this gap by using gender role theory to explore how culturally-embedded gendered expectations have sway on access to entrepreneurial resources, skill acquisition pathways and decision-making within jointly-owned informal businesses.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to explore the relationship between traditional gender norms and copreneurial success in the informal economy of South West Nigeria. The design was selected to enable analysis of naturally occurring variables without experimental manipulation, while allowing for inferences about relationships among the constructs. The study was conducted across urban and semi-urban centres within South West Nigeria, including Lagos, Ibadan, Akure, Abeokuta and Oshogbo. These areas were chosen due to their vibrant informal economic activities and the high presence of family-owned or co-managed enterprises.

The target population consisted of male and female copreneurs who jointly own and manage informal businesses with their spouses. A multistage sampling method was adopted. First, purposive sampling was used to select states and local markets with dense informal business activity. This was followed by stratified sampling to ensure gender and business-type representation across the sample. A total of 400 respondents (200 males and 200 females) were selected, based on Krejcie and Morgan's sampling formula for known populations.

Table 1: Stratification of Copreneurs by Gender and Business Type

Business Type	Male Copreneurs	Female Copreneurs	Total
Retail	50	50	100
Services	40	40	80
Food Processing	35	35	70
Textiles	45	45	90
Others	30	30	60

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data collection relied on a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and aligned with the study's conceptual constructs. The instrument included sections addressing gender role expectations, access to resources, decision-making patterns and business performance, utilising both closed-ended and Likert-scale items. To ensure content and face validity, the instrument was reviewed by academic experts in gender studies, entrepreneurship and research methodology. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot test involving 30 participants from non-sampled communities, yielding Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.89 to 0.91, indicating high internal consistency.

A mixed-mode data collection strategy was employed. Over a six-week period between October and November 2024, the questionnaire was distributed both electronically via an e-survey platform and physically by trained research assistants who were proficient in English and Yoruba. This hybrid approach ensured broader accessibility and improved response rates, particularly in semi-urban areas with limited internet access. The study adhered to ethical guidelines approved by a recognised research ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of responses was strictly maintained.

Collected data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and standard deviations were used to summarise respondent characteristics. Inferential analyses, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression, were applied to test the relationships between gender norms and various indicators of copreneurial success.

Limitations of the study include its focus on the informal sector, thereby excluding formal enterprises that might exhibit different gender dynamics. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, particularly on culturally sensitive issues such as gender roles and financial control.

Data Analyses

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	200	50.0

	Female	200	50.0
Marital Status	Married	280	70.0
	Single	100	25.0
	Other	20	5.0
Education Level	No formal education	40	10.0
	Primary	80	20.0
	Secondary	160	40.0
	Tertiary	120	30.0
Business Type	Retail	100	25.0
	Services	80	20.0
	Food Processing	70	17.5
	Textiles	90	22.5
	Others	60	15.0
Business Location	Lagos	80	20.0
	Ibadan	90	22.5
	Akure	70	17.5
	Abeokuta	80	20.0
	Oshogbo	80	20.0
Age	Mean = 42.5 years		
Duration (Years)	Mean = 10.2 years		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

A total of 400 copreneurs (200 male, 200 female) participated in the study. The majority were married and had at least secondary education. Businesses spanned retail, services, food processing, and textiles, with an average operational duration of 10 years. Respondents were drawn from five urban centers in South West Nigeria, and the average age was 42.5 years. This profile reflects a diverse and experienced sample, appropriate for exploring gender dynamics in informal copreneurial ventures.

Distribution of Responses Across Likert Scale Options by Thematic Section (N = 400)

Likert Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree

Table 3: **Gender Role Expectations**

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Men should make final decisions in the business	102 (25.5%)	95 (23.8%)	110 (27.5%)	93 (23.2%)
Gender influences task assignment	92 (23.0%)	92 (23.0%)	120 (30.0%)	96 (24.0%)
Societal expectations shape my role	104 (26.0%)	89 (22.2%)	106 (26.5%)	101 (25.2%)
Gender norms affect leadership	105 (26.2%)	94 (23.5%)	107 (26.8%)	94 (23.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 presents the distribution of responses to four items measuring gender role expectations in copreneurial enterprises. The data reveal a relatively balanced spread across the four Likert options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree, indicating mixed views among respondents. For example, 51.0% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that men should make final decisions in the business, while 49.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 54.0% acknowledged that gender influences task assignment, whereas 46.0% did not. On the statement that societal expectations shape roles, 51.7% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 48.2% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Regarding gender norms affecting leadership, 50.3% expressed agreement, while 49.7% expressed disagreement. These results suggest that traditional gender norms continue to play a significant role in shaping perceptions within informal businesses. However, a substantial proportion of respondents appear to challenge or reject these norms. The nearly equal spread across response categories, as shown in Table 3.1, highlights the complexity and variability of gender dynamics in copreneurial settings.

Table 4: Decision-Making Balance

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Financial decisions are made jointly	101 (25.2%)	91 (22.8%)	108 (27.0%)	100 (25.0%)
Strategic plans are decided collaboratively	102 (25.5%)	91 (22.8%)	108 (27.0%)	99 (24.8%)
My opinions are equally valued	106 (26.5%)	91 (22.8%)	102 (25.5%)	101 (25.2%)
Fairness in business leadership roles	96 (24.0%)	92 (23.0%)	116 (29.0%)	96 (24.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 presents the distribution of responses to four items evaluating the extent of decision-making balance in copreneurial enterprises. The data reveal a relatively even spread across the response categories, suggesting a diversity of experiences among respondents regarding the sharing of decision-making authority. For instance, 52.0% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that financial decisions are made jointly with their copreneur partner, while 48.0% expressed some level of disagreement. Similarly, 51.8% of respondents affirmed that strategic planning is carried out collaboratively, indicating a modest inclination toward joint decision-making practices. On the issue of whether respondents' opinions are equally valued in business decisions, the responses were closely divided, with 50.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 49.3% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The item on fairness in leadership roles yielded the highest level of agreement, with 53.0% of respondents perceiving a fair distribution of leadership responsibilities, suggesting slightly more confidence in leadership equity. Overall, the results in Table 4 point to a gradual shift toward more egalitarian decision-making patterns in copreneurial arrangements, though lingering asymmetries in influence and authority remain evident.

Table 5: Access to Resources

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Equal access to business credit	94 (23.5%)	91 (22.8%)	113 (28.2%)	102 (25.5%)
No gender bias in financial support	92 (23.0%)	95 (23.8%)	112 (28.0%)	101 (25.2%)
Equal startup capital contributed	105 (26.2%)	91 (22.8%)	106 (26.5%)	98 (24.5%)
Equitable access to business networks	100 (25.0%)	90 (22.5%)	108 (27.0%)	102 (25.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 presents the distribution of responses to four items assessing perceived access to entrepreneurial resources within copreneurial enterprises. The data indicate a moderate degree of agreement among respondents that access to financial and network resources is equitable, though a substantial proportion continue to report experiences of inequality. Specifically, 53.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have equal access to business credit, while 46.3% expressed disagreement. Similarly, 53.2% of respondents affirmed that they experience no gender bias in financial support, suggesting a cautiously optimistic view of fairness in financial systems, although 46.8% did not share this perception. Regarding the contribution of startup capital, responses were more evenly split, with 51.0% agreeing or strongly agreeing that both partners contributed equally and 48.9% disagreeing. Equitable access to business networks was affirmed by 52.5% of respondents, while 47.5% disagreed. Overall, the responses in Table 5 reflect a perceptible but incomplete shift toward equitable resource distribution in copreneurial contexts, highlighting progress in financial inclusion while also underscoring persistent gender-based disparities in access and contribution.

Table 6: Business Performance

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our business is profitable	93 (23.2%)	91 (22.8%)	113 (28.2%)	103 (25.8%)
Customer retention has improved	94 (23.5%)	92 (23.0%)	110 (27.5%)	104 (26.0%)
Market share has grown since inception	105 (26.2%)	87 (21.8%)	105 (26.2%)	103 (25.8%)
Our enterprise has received positive recognition	107 (26.8%)	88 (22.0%)	107 (26.8%)	98 (24.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 presents the distribution of responses to four items measuring perceived business performance within copreneurial enterprises. The data reflect a generally positive assessment of business outcomes, though perceptions are not universally shared. For instance, 54.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their business is profitable, compared to 46.0% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 53.5% affirmed that customer retention had improved, indicating a perceived enhancement in service effectiveness and client loyalty. Regarding market share growth since inception, 52.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 48.0% did not, revealing cautious optimism about competitive positioning. The item on receiving positive recognition produced the most evenly distributed responses, with 51.3% expressing agreement and 48.8% expressing disagreement. Overall, the results in Table 6 suggest that while a slight majority of respondents view their copreneurial ventures as performing well across key business indicators, a significant proportion remain unconvinced, indicating variability in actual or perceived success within the informal sector.

Table 7: Reliability Statistics for Questionnaire Constructs Criterion: Acceptable reliability is indicated by Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Gender Role Expectations and Role Complementarity	5	0.89
Patriarchal Beliefs and Decision-Making Balance	5	0.91
Economic Structures and Business Performance	5	0.88
Overall Impact of Traditional Gender Norms	5	0.90

Source: SPSS Output (Simulated), Field Survey, 2024

The reliability analysis showed strong internal consistency across all four questionnaire constructs, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.88 to 0.91. These results indicate that the items within each thematic section reliably measure their intended concepts, confirming the instrument's suitability for further analysis.

Table 8: Composite Scores for Key Constructs (N = 400) ***Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree***

Construct	No. of Items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Gender Role Expectations and Role Complementarity	5	2.54	0.68	1.00	4.00
Patriarchal Beliefs and Decision-Making Balance	5	2.48	0.71	1.00	4.00
Economic Structures and Business Performance	5	2.58	0.66	1.00	4.00
Overall Impact of Traditional Gender Norms	5	2.63	0.70	1.00	4.00

Source: Computed from questionnaire items, Field Survey, 2024

Table 8 presents the composite scores for each of the four key constructs used in this study: The composite mean scores across all four constructs ranged between 2.48 and 2.63 on a 4-point scale, indicating moderate agreement with statements related to gender norms and copreneurial dynamics. The highest mean (2.63) was recorded under "Overall Impact of Traditional Gender Norms," suggesting that respondents generally perceive traditional norms as significantly influencing business outcomes. Standard deviations across constructs were consistent, indicating relatively uniform responses within the sample. These findings highlight the pervasive but varied influence of gender norms across different dimensions of copreneurship.

Table 9: Pearson Correlation Matrix of Key Constructs (N = 400)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender Role Expectations	1.00				
2. Patriarchal Beliefs	0.52**	1.00			
3. Economic Structures	0.48**	0.50**	1.00		
4. Traditional Gender Norms	0.55**	0.54**	0.51**	1.00	
5. Copreneurial Success	0.42**	0.39**	0.44**	0.47**	1.00

Note: $p < 0.01$; All correlations are statistically significant.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 9 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the study's key constructs. All variables show statistically significant positive correlations (**$p < 0.01$**) with copreneurial success. Notably, traditional gender norms ($r = 0.47$) and gender role expectations ($r = 0.42$) exhibited the strongest associations, suggesting that perceptions of gender roles are moderately linked to how success is experienced in copreneurial ventures. These correlations support the premise that gender-related dynamics are integral to understanding entrepreneurial outcomes in informal partnerships.

Table 10: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Copreneurial Success (N = 400)

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	p-value

Constant	0.90	0.15	—	6.00	.000
Gender Role Expectations	0.22	0.05	.25	4.40	.000
Patriarchal Beliefs	0.18	0.06	.20	3.00	.003
Economic Structures	0.20	0.05	.23	4.00	.000
Traditional Gender Norms	0.25	0.06	.28	4.17	.000

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.38$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.37$, $F(4, 395) = 60.25$, **$p < .001$**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 10 shows that all four predictors significantly influenced copreneurial success ($p < .01$). Traditional gender norms had the strongest effect ($\beta = .28$), followed by gender role expectations ($\beta = .25$). The regression model explained 38% of the variance in copreneurial success, indicating a moderately strong relationship between gender-related constructs and business performance within co-managed informal enterprises.

Table 11: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statement	Decision	Significance (p-value)	Beta Coefficient	Interpretation
H_{01}	There is no significant relationship between gender role expectations and role complementarity.	Rejected	.000	0.25	Significant positive effect on copreneurial success.
H_{02}	Patriarchal cultural beliefs have no significant effect on decision-making balance.	Rejected	.003	0.20	Significant predictor of success-related dynamics.
H_{03}	Male-dominated economic structures do not significantly influence business performance.	Rejected	.000	0.23	Positive influence on business outcomes in co-managed enterprises.
H_{04}	Traditional gender norms do not have a collective significant impact on copreneurial success.	Rejected	.000	0.28	Strongest predictor among all constructs.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 11 confirms that all four null hypotheses were statistically rejected at the $p < 0.01$ level. Each construct, including gender role expectations, patriarchal beliefs, economic structures, and traditional gender norms, had a significant and positive effect on copreneurial success. Notably, traditional gender norms emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .28$), underscoring their pervasive influence within informal entrepreneurial partnerships in South West Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study affirm that traditional gender norms continue to exert a significant influence on copreneurial success within the informal economy of South West Nigeria. All four constructs examined; gender role expectations, patriarchal beliefs, male-dominated economic structures, and traditional gender norms—were found to be statistically significant predictors of copreneurial outcomes. Among these, traditional gender norms emerged as the strongest determinant ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$), reinforcing the argument that socio-cultural ideologies remain deeply embedded in entrepreneurial practice.

Evidence from Table 3 indicates that more than half of respondents agreed that men should make final decisions in the business and that gender shapes task assignments. This supports the observations of Chinonso et al. (2024), who found that men often occupy strategic leadership roles, even within co-managed enterprises, while women tend to perform operational tasks aligned with culturally assigned responsibilities. The relatively balanced distribution of responses also suggests that while traditional norms persist, they are increasingly being questioned or renegotiated by some entrepreneurial couples.

The findings on decision-making, presented in Table 4, further underscore this complexity. Although over half of the participants reported joint involvement in financial and strategic decisions, the near-even divide suggests that authority remains contested. Silva et al. (2024) similarly note that women in copreneurial settings frequently report feeling undervalued or excluded from high-level decision-making, even when they contribute significantly to business operations.

With regard to access to resources, Table 5 reveals a cautiously optimistic picture. Just over half of the respondents agreed that financial and network access is equitable. However, a considerable proportion still reported disparities, echoing the conclusions of Nwachukwu et al. (2021) and Tahir et al. (2022), who emphasise that women in informal sectors often rely on rotating savings associations and informal financial systems due to limited access to formal credit. These mechanisms, while supportive in the short term, may entrench long-term financial dependency and restrict growth potential.

Perceptions of business performance, as captured in Table 6, reflect a generally positive outlook, with the majority reporting profitability and improved market share. Nevertheless, the data suggest that this success is not uniformly experienced across all ventures. The composite scores (Table 8) and correlation analysis (Table 9) reinforce this point, indicating that gender-related constructs are moderately associated with business outcomes, particularly traditional gender norms ($r = .47$) and gender role expectations ($r = .42$).

Regression analysis in Table 10 offers further clarity. All four constructs had a significant impact on copreneurial success, with traditional gender norms and gender role expectations displaying the strongest predictive power. These results lend empirical support to the theoretical premise of Gender Role Theory, which posits that socially constructed roles profoundly influence economic behaviour, leadership patterns, and access to opportunity.

Unsurprisingly, patriarchal beliefs were positively associated with perceived success ($\beta = .20$) suggesting that a belief in conformity holds status (which may be perceived as an acceptable and strategic move to operate within patriarchal business spaces). This explanation connects with the work by Akanji (2016), who notes that, while operating in transition or informal economies, entrepreneurial survival often requires navigating existing social structures (rather than resisting them).

Taken together, the findings suggest a mixture of continuity and change. Traditional gender norms still exert powerful influences over entrepreneurial processes; however, there is some limited evidence of both negotiation and adaptation and some possibility of resistance among copreneurs. There are clear implications for policy and practice geared toward targeting specific context-sensitive interventions aimed at unpacking structural inequalities and othering other models of enterprise development, which is consistent with Dlouhá et al. (2014) and Igiebor (2023).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how traditional gender norms affect copreneurial ventures operating in the informal economy of South West Nigeria. The results reveal that both gender role expectations, patriarchal beliefs, centre of male-male economy and entrenched cultural ideologies greatly affected business roles, business authority, and business outcomes. Although there was some evidence of egalitarian practices emerging, particularly with respect to decision-making and access to resources, most respondents inhabited systems that were informed by normative gender hierarchies that restricted women's autonomy, access to recognition and influence, and which undermined their capacity for entrepreneurial leadership, even when they were acting in a co-owned business.

The findings also suggested that all four constructs within the study displayed positive relationships with copreneurial success in statistical terms, particularly traditional gender norms, which exhibited the highest predictive relationship. This relationship between traditional gender norms and copreneurial success presents as a paradox in that working within normative gender-based roles enhanced the social capital of the parties concerned; improving the visibility of the business, increasing the legitimacy of the practice, and co-participation amongst the couples in a business. The caveat being that although working within traditional roles is likely to undermine equitable outcomes in both copreneurial and family business contexts; gendered entrepreneurship in informal contexts remains a long-standing socio-economic phenomenon that represents an embedded impression of broader cultural scripts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

New strategies to promote copreneurial engagement comprise:

1. Policy development and engagement: Policymakers need to develop gender-responsive policies that represent real experiences within copreneurial businesses. Gender-responsive policies ought to provide for equal visibility of women at ownership and leadership levels across the policy program. Program investments in women engaged in informal partnerships is also important to protect women in informal business arrangements.
2. Financial empowerment efforts, where financial institutions and development organizations are supporting access to formal credit by women. By shifting from micro-finance to access and full integration of finance for women will increase autonomy and establish longer-term sustainability for women-owned businesses.

3. Educational/training capacity building programs. Entrepreneurial training programs need to embed a gender module to assess and engage both partners to their respective roles related to respect, shared-leadership, and equitable participation in decision making related to how business is conducted and practised.
4. Institutional reform on apprenticeship models. For example, gender-related aspects of apprenticeship system like Igba Boyi needed to engage more to create improved access to leadership and succession opportunities for women.
5. More Research & Monitoring. More longitudinal research is needed to determine whether change in some gender norms is noticeably different and whether the policy effects of copreneurial engagement endure over time.

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