DOING BUSINESS AMIDST CONSTRAINTS: A CASE STUDY OF SOMALI REFUGEE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN EASTLEIGH AREA, NAIROBI

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors affecting the performance of refugee women in business. The findings of this study were expected to provide reasons why Somali Refugee women tend to succeed in business in Nairobi’s Eastleigh area despite the numerous barriers/constraints they encounter. The study would expose what contributes to the success in businesses ran by Somali refugee women. This study was to avail lessons that other business owners could borrow and business ideas that could be replicated elsewhere. The case study was carried out in the local Eastleigh area in Nairobi Kenya often called ‘little Mogadishu’. The objective of the study was to investigate why Somali Refugee women tend to succeed in business in Nairobi’s Eastleigh area despite the numerous barriers/constraints they encounter. This study adopted the survey design. The study was carried out in Eastleigh Estate, Pumwani division in Nairobi. The main target for the study was Somali women refugees in Kenya doing small scale businesses in Eastleigh. The target population consisted of 200 Somali women refugees who owned business in Eastleigh’s 3rd to 12th Streets and 5 keys informants in Eastleigh. The researcher collected data from the Somali business women in the area both in the malls and the small stores and stands by the roadsides through interviews and questionnaires. Data were analyzed statistically by use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions and percentages were presented in form of tables, graphs and charts. Findings indicated that the types of businesses set up by women refugees in Eastleigh were influenced by access to capital, social networks and business strategy. The findings also indicated that women faced several barriers including the burden of household chores, lack of capital, cultural factors, insecurity, lack of proper documentation, education and training. The women also employed various strategies including use of partnerships and social networks to sustain their businesses and overcome challenges faced. The study recommended that government should issue refugee business women with proper permits; women should seek help from business organizations and should engage extra help in business and at home to enable cope with the business demands.