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Gender Equality and Performance of Private Businesses in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda

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Abstract

Gender importance in socio-economic welfare has contributed to several interested persons' appreciation and assistance for constructive opinions to females and males' entrepreneurial improvement. In Rwanda, there is no gender discrimination in doing business, this is to give equal entrepreneurial opportunity to all entrepreneurs irrespective of their gender. However, even though the Government of Rwanda supports businessmen and businesswomen to perform in private businesses, gender equality in private businesses remains an issue of concern because the percentage of women's representation in private businesses is still low, which is a problem to be addressed. The purpose of this study was to assess how gender equality affects private business performance in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda. The study used a quantitative research design and collected primary data from 100 private business owners using a questionnaire with close-ended questions. The sample size was calculated using Slovin's method, and stratified sampling techniques were used to obtain respondents from the district's 10 sectors. The collected data were analyzed using quantitative data analysis approaches, generating descriptive statistics outputs using Stata version 17 and SPSS version 24 tools. Pearson Chi-square tests were used to test the impact of gender equality on business performance. The means and standard deviations of the respondent scores were computed for the Likert statements to assess the key factors that critically affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females. The findings revealed that there are gender differences in business characteristics, most females among business owners use a lower capital of less than 500,000 Rwanda

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Francs (32% for females, while for males is 17%), and have a lower business income. Females-owned businesses employ fewer employees (about 40% of all employees) than males-owned businesses (about 60 % of all employees). The statistics test has provided enough evidence that the relationship between gender equality effect and performance of private businesses is statistically significant because their p-values equal 0.000 or less than 0.005 (sign=0.0000<0.05). The findings also indicated that the topmost prevailing severe problems that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females were COVID-19 (\bar{x} =4.45, SD=0.928 for males and \bar{x} =4.30, SD =1.030 for females), high taxes(\bar{x} =4.47, SD =0.545 for males and \bar{x} =4.53, SD =0.723 for females), instability of market price (\bar{x} =4.40, SD =0.613 for males and \bar{x} =4.34,SD =0.918 for females), high rent of premises (\bar{x} =4.32, SD =0.593 for males and \bar{x} =4.21, SD =0.840 for females), and insufficient employed capital (\bar{x} =4.21, SD =0.550 for males and \bar{x} =4.01, SD =0.866 for females). This study has identified that female and male owned businesses are facing the same business challenges. These problems need to be addressed; however, it will take time and joint efforts of business owners themselves, government, stakeholders, and researchers to attain solutions and remove these severe factors that prevent the performance of private businesses. The study recommends that business owners, especially women with lower startup capital, should approach financial institutions for support in promoting their businesses. The study also recommends that female-owned businesses should join and create cooperatives with their counterparts to share business challenges, experiences, and incentives of working together. Additionally, the study recommends that financial institutions should facilitate and encourage businesswomen to obtain bank loans to grow their businesses. The study also recommends that the government should consider these recommendations and provide support in eradicating the identified business challenges.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Business Performance, Severe Factors, Nyarugenge District, Rwanda*

1.0 Introduction

Gender importance in socio-economic welfare has contributed to several interested persons' appreciation and assistance for constructive opinions to females and males' entrepreneurial improvement. According to available studies, entrepreneurship is among the most important aspects for socioeconomic growth, job creation, and country tax mobilization in both developed and developing nations (Bosma *et al.*, 2020). Though, in Rwanda the gender gap is still a great problem, as literature has revealed that the share of females joining businesses is poorer than that of males. The presence of a gap between males and females in business has made the research interesting progress among academicians (Hughes *et al.*, 2012). Implementing national policies which serve at decreasing the gender gap within the private sector is smart economics, therefore it is a way to fully join the potential of female entrepreneurs. National leaders throughout Africa are acknowledging that policymakers need to increase the chances for businesswomen to act as a catalyst for growth and job creation (World Bank Group, 2019).

To address the gender gap in entrepreneurship in Rwanda, policymakers should prioritize policies that promote equal access to resources and opportunities for female entrepreneurs. This can include implementing affirmative action programs that provide targeted support to female entrepreneurs, such as access to finance, training, and networking opportunities. For instance, the Rwanda Development Board has launched initiatives such as the Women in Business Program, which provides tailored support to female entrepreneurs to improve their competitiveness and access to markets (Rwanda

Development Board, 2021). Rwanda has made significant strides in promoting gender equality, including passing laws to protect women's rights and promoting women's political representation. However, cultural and societal norms that prioritize male dominance in business continue to limit women's participation in entrepreneurship (Dollar et al., 2012). Addressing this requires engaging communities and promoting gender equality through education, media, and cultural activities. Hence, addressing the gender gap in entrepreneurship is crucial for Rwanda's socio-economic development. Hence, the study examined the relationship between gender equality and performance of private businesses in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda.

1.1 Problem of Statement

Worldwide, females have less chances to involve in business activities than males. In reality, gender disparity is a key challenge on local, nationwide, regional, and worldwide levels. It does not only affect the lives community, but gender inequality also impedes and delays economic growth. In Rwanda, females are underrepresented in private business activities, and Rwandan business is dominated by males (Simon, 2017). In previous years, the Rwandan community considered a female as weak and incapable of doing business (Musomandera *et al.*, 2015). However, study shows that involving women in business activities benefits both them and society (Matsoso & Iwu, 2016). In Rwanda, there is no gender discrimination in doing business, this is to give equal entrepreneurial opportunity to all entrepreneurs irrespective of their gender. However, even though the Government of Rwanda supports businessmen and businesswomen to perform in private businesses, gender equality in private businesses remains an issue of concern because the percentage of women's representation in private businesses is still low, which is a problem to be addressed. Therefore, based on the above issue, the researcher was interested to assess how gender equality affects private business performance in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to assess how gender equality influences private business performance in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda.

2.0 Literature Review

The literature looked at how the gender equality variables, severe factors affect private business performance.

2.1 Main characteristics of male and female owned businesses

Theoretically, both males and females should have the same advantages in business because doing business is for both. However, men dominate the business sector and have more chances than women (Alam *et al.*, 2012). Typically, men are more engaged in innovation and product development, while female owned businesses are more involved in informal businesses, micro-enterprises, and small firms like retail and services (Ssendi, 2013). All over the world, both male and female owned businesses have a successful performance, and they share some characteristics, but there are some significant differences between male and female owned businesses. Their decision-making processes, business objectives, business employed capital, entrepreneurship education and training, capacity for networking, and motivations are the key themes (Shmailan, 2016). Several studies pick out how gender influences businesses in the different factors such as business employed capital, education level, work

experience of the business owner; as well as gaining access to various businesses and investment in social networking (Catherine & Sunday, 2016). Other research confirms that fewer females indicate the tendency to undertake their particular businesses, this is aggravated by the results that show more females are less disposed to be self-employed (Catherine & Sunday, 2016).

In Rwanda, almost 2% of businesses are registered as limited liability firms or businesses, and 95 percent are under individual ownership. Among these businesses females are underrepresented, with only 33% of firms are female-owned businesses (NISR, 2020). Adenike & Klaudia, (2021), in their analytical report on the sales performance amongst Rwandan enterprises and gender based, in terms of business annual turnover they found that male-led businesses typically generate ten times more revenue than their female counterparts each year, but the gap between their sales is smaller for women-led businesses. Additionally, it is evident that women face greater barriers to obtaining financial success and are underrepresented in leadership roles. Loans and credit lines typically have similarities between the genders. According to Simon (2017), in his research on the challenges to women entrepreneurship in Kigali, Rwanda, he found that the majority of women respondents (64.6%) own and operate retail enterprises, the majority of which (67.8%) are in the retail and service sector. The majority of respondents (39.5%) have been in business for six to ten years, and many of them (39.7%) received their initial funding from their husbands. 92.9 percent of women entrepreneurs began their businesses with capital of less than RwF 500 000.

2.2 Effect of Gender Ownership on Business Performance

To clarify the effect of gender ownership on the performance of businesses, the study underlines many gender-related aspects that can impact the performance of businesses. these challenges differ and comprise different sources and duties implemented in business by females and males. A strong team of proof indicates that enhancing the position of females is fundamental to continuous progress. Once females are trained, educated, and get revenue, mortality rates of children decrease and the care and health of children enhance. Gender equality can also assist the strengthening of the growth of the economy by increasing female labor force participation and education level realization, which can result in improved substantial production and GDP growth. Businesses are mastering how an inconsideration of gender problems can interrupt their planned final results as they pursue to know new markets expansion and profit inputs. Females contribute 40 percent of the worldwide workforce, and the weakness to utilize their abilities and fruitful potential has costs. Gender respects are also significant for corporations or firms seeking to increase their customers' requirements and get an idea of the female business market. Also, evidence shows that more females in leading positions drive toward better business performance. Research findings indicate that the firms with the largest proportion of female board directors outperform those with the lowest return on employed capital and transactions by 26% and 16% respectively (Susan M. K., 2015).

Shava and Rungani (2016) said that business owner contribution has an important effect on the business's performance. They proved this idea and indicated that literature tells that the contributions of businessmen and businesswomen take an important part when considering growth restrictions and underperformance of businesswomen. In developing countries, the contributions of females and males vary from human capital to financial capital resources. There have been few kinds of research on the substance of this topic, though some researchers make some comments on it. Their findings on gender and performance of businesses could be classified into three categories: (i) Researchers who confirmed

that businesswomen perform less good than businessmen, (ii) those that argued that there is no substantial change in performance between businessmen and businesswomen, (iii) and researchers who reported that businesswomen perform better than businessmen.

According to Osunsan (2015), his research findings showed that businesswomen perform less than male-owned businesses. Bardasi *et al.*, (2011), in their research confirmed that there is no major change in performance between businessmen and businesswomen. And those that indicated that businesswomen perform better than businessmen (Adenike & Klaudia, 2021). Fafchamps *et al.*, (2011), their studies revealed that females perform worse on quantitative financial indicators like employment size generated, total revenues, and productivity. It is said that females do not undertake businesses for financial profit, but to pursue key objectives (for example family and work obligations). The previous research conducted on dissimilarities in the performance of businesses by gender reported that businesswomen were more probably to fail because they have lower levels of revenue, earnings, and employment size (Radipere & Dhliwayo, 2014). Regarding Nderitu (2013), aspects like human capital, social learning, motivations network, connection, goals, demographics, and environmental factors have the most important place in the performance of businesses owned by females. And he found that businesswomen have limited entrepreneurial skills, and business experience and struggled more from liability of inventiveness and their financial performance was significantly lower than businessmen.

However, other research does not discover women perform worse when other performance metrics (like total factor profitability, growth of revenues, or the size of employment) are utilized. By using World Bank Enterprise Survey, Bardasi *et al.* (2011), discovered that in Africa, when measured by value-added per worker and total factor productivity, businesswomen appear to be at least as fruitful as businessmen when the industry in which they work is held constant. Also, Delecourty & Odyssia (2019) reported that there were no major gender dissimilarities in small business performance results. The study results on gender and performance of small businesses indicate that women earn at least as much as men.

2.3 Factors that have a Severely Impact on Business Performance

Businesses tend to confront a similar difficulty in emerging countries. However, the severity of the issues varies from country to country and is based on the peculiarities of the firms. Private businesses today face a number of internal and external challenges that limit their ability to operate well and grow. Many barriers to the functioning of firms have been identified via a detailed analysis of several research. (Aremu & Adeyemi, 2011). The context of business performance challenges, businesses face both internal and external limitations that impact their performance, comprising managerial ability, cash flow management, quality control, working environment and infrastructures, market conditions, and financial considerations. According to Abiy (2016), the two major reasons for small businesses' failure are limited management skills and insufficient capital. High tax rates, corruption, and government or industry regulation in the context of business permits and licenses were identified as the most significant limitations to the business activities of 160 small businesses in Tanzania (Mulugeta, 2011).

Similarly, Aylin *et al.* (2013) assert that managerial experiences are critical for the progress of small businesses and that poor management skill is an obstacle to progress and one of the reasons that can

cause the business failure. Also, Mbugua & Ondabu (2014) researched on factors affecting the employment generation of small businesses in Kenya and discovered that poor access to finance and managerial skills are the primary causes of business failure. According to Asama *et al.*(2015), the key business environmental factors affecting Algerian small and medium enterprises in employment generation are unfair competition from the informal sector, time-consuming and expensive bureaucratic procedures, onerous laws, policies, and regulations, an inadequate tax system, a lack of access to external financing, and a lack of human resource capacity. According to Simon (2017), who conducted a study on the challenges to women entrepreneurship in Kigali, Rwanda, he discovered that businesswomen in Kigali face more challenges, such as high shop rentals, a lack of start-up capital, a lack of collateral to obtain a loan, high taxes, a high-interest rate, high cost of transport services, and absence of information technology skills. While minor challenges were a lack of market opportunities, a lack of business experience, the high cost of electricity, and insufficient access to finance.

2.4 Private Business performance

Private business performance can be assessed in different ways, for instance by sales revenue, cash flow, and product quality, and there are usually many different determinants affecting business success. Economists in Turkey have conducted an ANP model that consists of a cluster of the most vital components that affect a business's success. These components are owner-related factors, business internal environment, business expertise, country and business environment, and institutional support. Some of the factors in the different clusters include qualified personnel, facility location, access to credit, product technology, and so on (Karpak & Topcu, 2012). Studies on business performance use a variety of metrics (Radipere & Dhlwayo, 2014; Dele, 2012; Amran, 2011). The above performance metrics can be summarized as financial and non-financial indicators. Financial indicators comprise cash flow, profit on resources, and equity as a measure of business performance. Although the non-financial measures comprise factors like human capital, marketing effectiveness, customer service, employee satisfaction, tactics to success, financial practice, innovation, corporate culture, and processes (Dele, 2012).

The above empirical studies and theoretical review are from different research conducted locally, regionally, and worldwide. Various latest researchers concentrated on the subject of gender and business performance. Though, the research findings are frequently contradictory. Delecourty and Odysia (2019), discovered no difference in the results of the business performance when females and male-owned businesses confront similar structural constraints. Adenike and Klaudia (2021) found that females who did not confront financial restraints grew their returns 20 percent faster than men who did not confront financial limitations. While the findings of a study carried out by Julio and Daouda (2016), show that the majority of women-owned small businesses had lower incomes per employee and fewer employees than the majority of men-owned small businesses. According to Danielle & Amani(2013), based on their sample, they found that there was an important disparity in gross profits between Lebanese women-owned small business companies and Lebanese men-owned small businesses. They confirmed that small businesswomen differ from small businessmen in terms of total incomes. In general, businesswomen earn less income than their male counterparts. This fact was confirmed by Rahmasari (2015), whose paper proved that businesses owned by females have lower income, profit, and poor marketing scopes than those owned by males.

Other various studies have found that aspects involved in the business owner's human resources and business characteristics can explain business performance disparity. For instance, Olakunle *et al.*, (2020) believed that for small firms, human resources are an important factor that affects success, which can lead to higher earnings. This disparity could be caused by several reasons such as the education level and business owners' experience, age, and the size of a firm. Many of those studies were conducted in countries that have no similar background with Rwanda and are contradictory in the majority of cases. Due to this contradiction, this research aimed to assess how gender equality affects private business performance and to find out the main factors that critically affect the performance of private businesses owned by males and females in Rwanda.

3.0 Methodology

The study utilized a quantitative design. The use of quantitative methods was considered advantageous as it allowed for statistical analysis of the data. The study's target population consisted of 17,987 private business owners practicing in Nyarugenge District, distributed among the district's 10 sectors. The sample size for the study was 100 businesses, calculated using Slovin's method. The number of respondents from each sector was obtained using stratified sampling techniques. A questionnaire containing close-ended questions was administered to the respondents through personal interviews at their business premises, collecting primary information from private business owners. The collected data were analyzed using quantitative data analysis approaches, generating descriptive statistics outputs using Stata version 17 and SPSS version 24 tools. Pearson Chi-square tests were used to test the impact of gender equality on business performance. The means and standard deviations of the respondent scores were computed for the Likert statements to assess the key factors that critically affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females. These scores were analyzed by comparing the mean scores and deviations among the respondents.

4.0 Key Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Before proceeding to present and discuss the findings, it is important to indicate the socio-demographic information of 100 interviewed business owners in Nyarugenge District. About 47% of the total respondents were males while the share of females was 53%. Referring to their marital status, about 74% of male respondents were married while female respondents were 60.4%. The majority of respondents have a university level (44%), around 35% have a secondary level, and 16% of all respondents have a primary level. Among male respondents who have a higher share, have a secondary level (about 40%), while female respondents who have a higher percentage, have a university level (about 57%). Also, male respondents who have a university level were about 30%, while female respondents who have a secondary level were 30%. This ensured a good sample population who was educated and therefore, was in a better position to answer questions and gave technical opinions on the topic of the study. The majority of the respondents were within the age group of 31-40 years (47%) and age group of 41-50 years (26%), those who were under age group of 31-40 years was 15%, and above age groups of 41-50 was 12%. This age group distribution was good, because the study was able to collect data from young and old respondents who provided a good mix of private business owners with different experiences necessary for the present status of business performance.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Findings

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics for Main characteristics of male and female-owned businesses

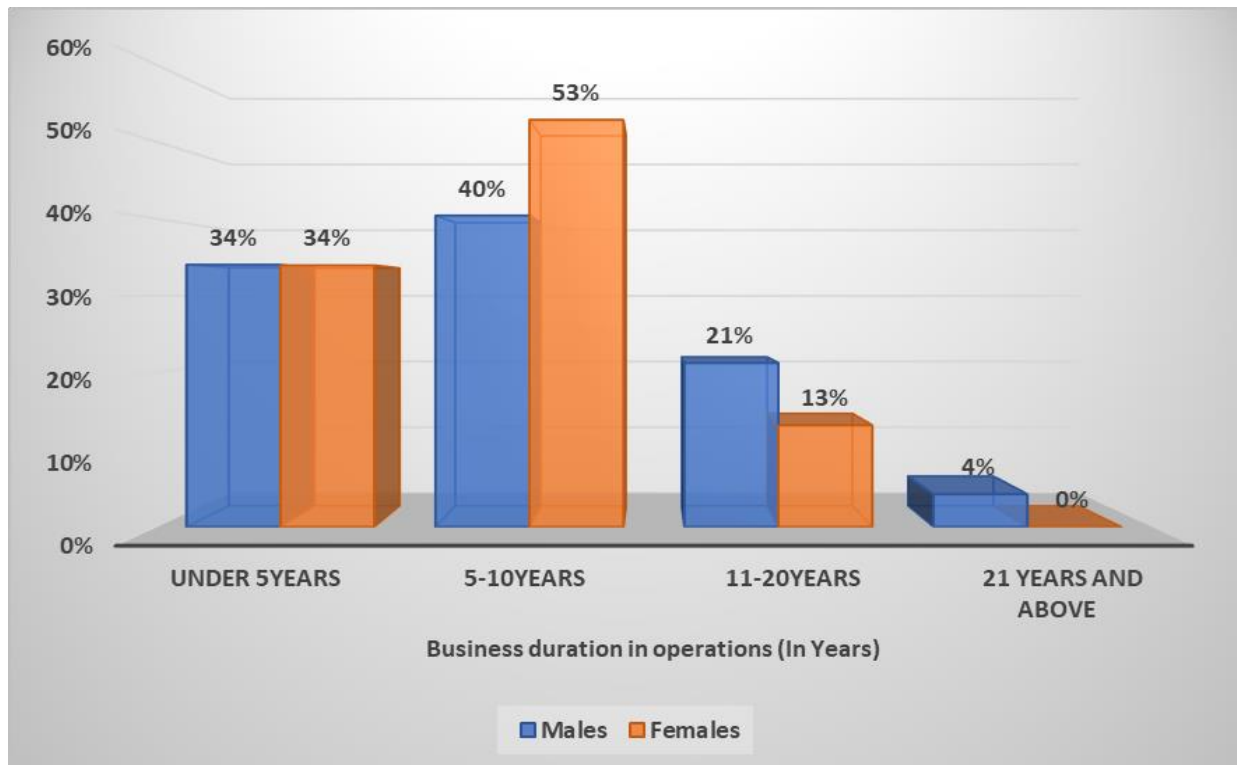
This section presents the main characteristics of male and female owned businesses in Nyarugenge District. Respondents were asked to provide key information related to their businesses. The following tables summarize the main characteristics of respondents by the business sector that they are working on, duration of time that business has been in operations, business registration status, business working experience, business size and employment, size of employed capital, main sources of employed capital, description of business’s annual turnover and income, key pull and push factors to start a business and source of entrepreneurial training and skills of the business owners. Table1 provides the statistics of different business sectors by the gender of the business owner.

Table 1: Business sector by gender of the business owners

| Business Sector | Gender of the business owner | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Services | 25 | 53.2 | 13 | 24.5 | 38 | 38.0 |
| Manufacturing | 2 | 4.3 | 3 | 5.7 | 5 | 5.0 |
| Agriculture | 1 | 2.1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.0 |
| Wholesale | 4 | 8.5 | 6 | 11.3 | 10 | 10.0 |
| Retail | 15 | 31.9 | 31 | 58.5 | 46 | 46.0 |
| Total | 47 | 100.0 | 53 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

Source: Primary data,2022

As indicated by Table1, the majority of the male owned businesses (about 53 %) are engaged in the service sector such as hairdressing salons, bars, restaurants, etc., and about 32% are in the retail sector. While the majority of businesswomen (58.5%) are in retail, and about 24% are in services. Remarkably, the share of females owned businesses in the service sector is less than the share of males owned businesses. This gap can be explained by the fact that starting business in the service sector requires a high capital, while starting a business in the retail sector, requires a low capital. In general, 46 percent of male-female business owners are in the retail sector, while 38 percent of business owners are in services. These results are consistent with the findings of Simon (2017), who reported that business owners are concentrated in retail and services. The Figure1 provides the picture of duration of time that businesses owned by males and females have been in operation in Nyarugenge District.



Source: Primary data,2022

Figure 1: Duration of time that a business has been in operation by gender of the business owners.

As revealed by Figure1, among female respondents; about 53% of the respondents said that they had operated their businesses for a period between 5-10 years, while among male respondents is 40%. These results are consistent with the findings of Simon (2017), who revealed that the majority of business owners have been in existence for a period of between 6 and 10 years. Those who operated for 11-20 years constituted 21% of male business owners, while female business owners only constituted 13%. The findings show that among male and female business owners, the share of their businesses operated for a period under five years is the same (34%). This figure reveals that for businesses in operation, the length of 11 years and above, the share of businesses owned by females decreases faster than those owned by males. These results are also consistent with the findings of Catherine and Sunday (2016) who found that businesswomen were more prevalent to terminate business operations than businessmen. Table 2 indicates the of employed capital by the gender of the business owner.

Table 2: Size of business employed capital by gender of the business owners.

| Size of current employed capital (In Rwanda Francs) | Gender of the business owner | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Under 500,000 | 8 | 17.0 | 17 | 32.1 | 25 | 25.0 |
| 500,000-5 Million | 23 | 48.9 | 17 | 32.1 | 40 | 40.0 |
| More than 5 to 20 million | 12 | 25.5 | 16 | 30.2 | 28 | 28.0 |
| More than 20 million and above | 4 | 8.5 | 3 | 5.7 | 7 | 7.0 |
| Total | 47 | 100.0 | 53 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

Source: Primary data,2022

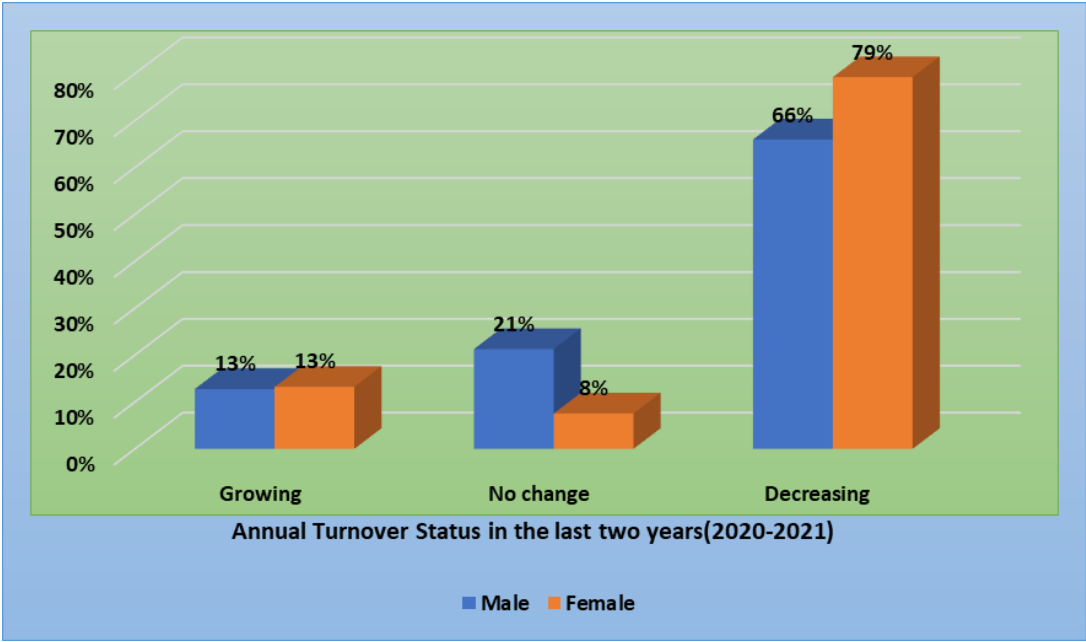
Table 2 indicates that 25% of business owners reported using a lower capital (less than 500,000 Rwanda Francs), a high percentage of those who reported using a lower capital is for females owned businesses (32%), while among males owned businesses is 17%. These results are consistent with the findings of Simon (2017), who found that the majority of women entrepreneurs in Kigali, began their businesses with capital of less than 500,000 Rwanda Francs. A high percentage (40%) of business owners use a capital estimated to be between 500,000 and 5,000,000 Rwanda Francs, a high share of those who reported using capital of this range is for males owned businesses (about 49%), while among females owned businesses is 32%. Business owners reported using a capital estimated to be more than 5 million to 20,000,000 Rwanda Francs were 28 percent. But the percentage of capital estimated to be more than 20 million and above is very minor. Table 3 indicates the size of business annual turnover by the gender of the business owner.

Table 3: Size of Business Annual Turnover in December 2021 by gender of the business owners

| Business Annual Turnover in December 2021 (In Rwanda Francs) | Gender of the business owner | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | Freq. | Perc. | Freq. | Perc. | Freq. | Perc. |
| Under 300, 000 | 8 | 17.0 | 14 | 26.4 | 22 | 22.0 |
| 300,000-1Million | 11 | 23.4 | 12 | 22.6 | 23 | 23.0 |
| More than 1 to 5 million | 15 | 31.9 | 17 | 32.1 | 32 | 32.0 |
| More than 5 to 20 million | 10 | 21.3 | 7 | 13.2 | 17 | 17.0 |
| More than 20 million | 3 | 6.4 | 3 | 5.7 | 6 | 6.0 |
| Total | 47 | 100.0 | 53 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

Source: Primary data,2022

As revealed by Table 3, overall 32 percent of business owners reported that during 2021 their turnover was in range of 1 to 5 million. For this range of annual turnover, the share of females and males-owned businesses is almost the same. The same table shows that females owned businesses have a high proportion (about 26%) of those who reported having a lower business annual turnover (Under 300,000 Rwanda Francs), which means that the majority of business owners who get under 300,000 annual turnovers in Rwanda Franc are females. Also, a share of females owned businesses with a business annual turnover of more than 5 million was less than the share of males-owned businesses with the same annual turnover (about 19% and 28%, respectively). These results are confirmed by findings of Catherine and Sunday (2016) who found that businesswomen have low levels of sales. Figure2 depicts the status of the business annual turnover for the businesses owned by males and females in 2020-2021 year.



Source: Primary data,2022

Figure 2: Status of business's annual turnover in the last two years by gender of the business owners

Figure 2 indicates that about 79 percent of the female-owned businesses have reported that their business annual turnover in the last two years was decreasing, while for males-owned businesses, is 66 percent. This high decreasing rate of businesses can be linked to COVID19 pandemic and can be the reason why many business owners reported that their business annual turnover was decreasing. These results reflect those of Alexander *et al.*, (2020) who conducted the impact of COVID-19 on small business outcomes and expectations, they found that across the full sample, 43% of businesses had temporarily closed, and nearly all of these closures were due to COVID-19. Respondents that had temporarily closed largely pointed to reductions in demand and employee health concerns as the reasons for closure, with disruptions in the supply chain being less of a factor. On average, the businesses reported having reduced their active employment by 39% since January 2020. Table4 shows the number of employees that are employed by private business owners in Nyarugenge District

Table 4: Number of employees by gender of the business owners

| Gender of the business owner | Number of hired employees | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | Both sexes | Percentage |
| Male | 136 | 74 | 210 | 60.2 |
| Female | 67 | 72 | 139 | 39.8 |
| Total | 203 | 146 | 349 | 100 |

Source: Primary data,2022

As shown by Table 4, males-owned businesses reported to employ about 60 percent of all employees while females-owned businesses reported to employ about 40 percent of total employees. From these results, it is remarkable that females-owned businesses have hired fewer employees than their counterparts. These results confirm the findings of Catherine and Sunday (2016) who found that businesswomen deliver few jobs to the general public. This means that concerning the number of business employees, there exists a remarkable gap in business employees between businesses owned by males and females. Table 5 indicates the main sources of employed capital used to start a business by males and females owned businesses.

Table 5: Main Source of employed capital used to start a business by gender of the business owners.

| Main sources of business current employed capital | Gender of the business owner | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Personal/Family savings | 22 | 46.8 | 36 | 67.9 | 58 | 58.0 |
| Friends | 4 | 8.5 | 5 | 9.4 | 9 | 9.0 |
| Financial institutions | 21 | 44.7 | 12 | 22.6 | 33 | 33.0 |
| Total | 47 | 100.0 | 53 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

Source: Primary data,2022

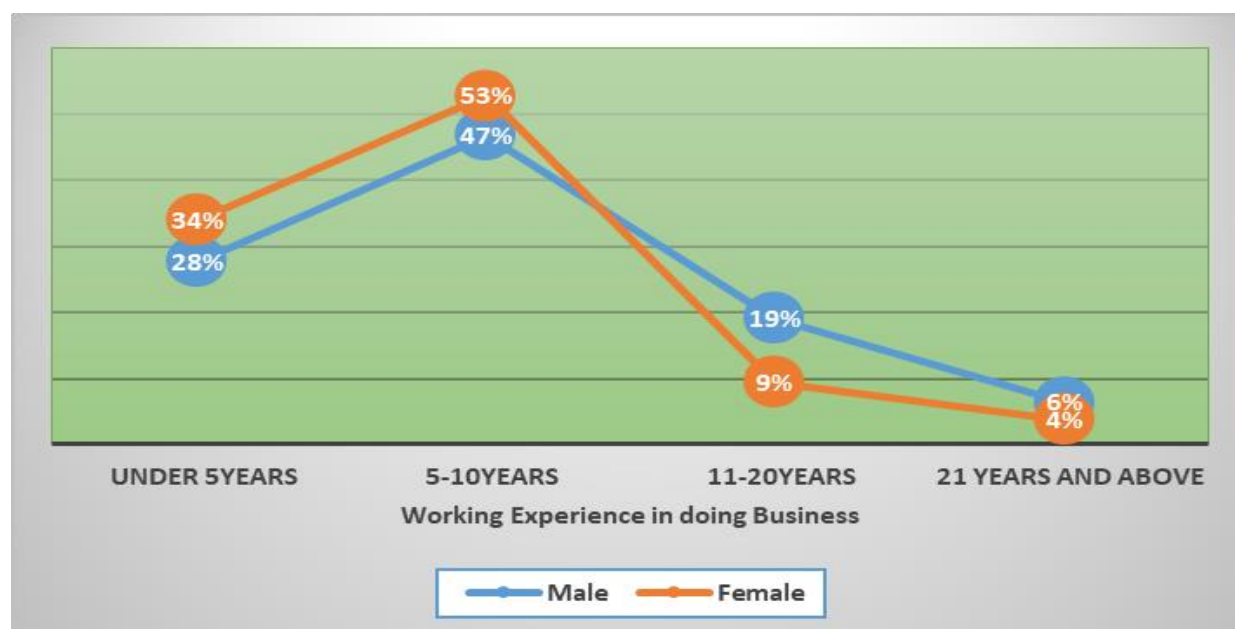
Starting own business requires an initial investment rather than just having a business idea. From the results, as shown in Table 5, the majority of respondents (58%) use personal or family savings as the main source of employed capital, used to start their businesses. Results for the same table also show that among females-owned businesses, about 68% use personal or family savings as the main source of employed capital used to start their businesses, while males-owned businesses were about 47%. Businesswomen who use financial services as the main source of employed capital to start a business were about 23% while males were 45%. This means that businesswomen are less using financial institution services. These findings are in line with the results from the study of Simon (2017) regarding the majority of female-owned businesses got start-up capital from their family and relatives, while few businesswomen use financial institutions as the main source of employed capital to start their businesses. Table 6 provides the statistics related to business experience by the gender of the business owners.

Table 6: Experience in doing business by gender of the business owners.

| Experience in doing business (in Years) | Gender of the business owner | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Under 5Years | 13 | 27.7 | 18 | 34.0 | 31 | 31.0 |
| 5-10years | 22 | 46.8 | 28 | 52.8 | 50 | 50.0 |
| 11-20Years | 9 | 19.1 | 5 | 9.4 | 14 | 14.0 |
| 21 Years and above | 3 | 6.4 | 2 | 3.8 | 5 | 5.0 |
| Total | 47 | 100.0 | 53 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

Source: Primary data,2022

Table 6 shows that the majority (63%) of the business owners had working experience of between 6-10 years, 31% had worked for under 5 years, and 19% had worked for over 10 years. The findings indicated that varied responses could be collected from the respondents considering that those who had little experience and those who had a lot of experience participated in the study. When considering the comparison based on working experience between male and female-owned businesses, females-owned businesses with working experience of under 11 years had a high percentage (87%) than their counterparts (74%), while for working experience of over 10 years, females-owned businesses were about 13% whereas males-owned businesses were about 25%. Figure Figure3 reveals that the number of businesswomen is high in a range of under 11 years of working experience, and this number starts to decrease at 11 years and above of working experience.



Source: Primary data,2022

Figure 3: Experience in doing business by gender of the business owners.

The Table 7 indicates the reasons that male and female-owned businesses are pulled or pushed to start their businesses.

Table 7: Pull and Push Factors to Start a Business by gender of the business owners.

| Pull and Push Factors to Start a Business | Gender of the business owner | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Both sexes | |
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Opportunity | 19 | 40.4 | 16 | 30.2 | 35 | 35.0 |
| Business experience | 4 | 8.5 | 1 | 1.9 | 5 | 5.0 |
| Unemployment | 16 | 34.0 | 29 | 54.7 | 45 | 45.0 |
| Job dissatisfaction | 8 | 17.0 | 7 | 13.2 | 15 | 15.0 |
| Total | 47 | 100.0 | 53 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 |

Source: Primary data,2022

The motivators to establish own business are many and vary from individual to individual. Table 7 shows that most of the business owners (45%) started their own business due to the unemployment situation. These results are consistent with the findings of Arya (2015) and Malunda (2014) who indicated that most of the respondent entrepreneurs establish their own business for the reason that they have no other jobs. The respondents who started their own businesses because they discovered an opportunity in doing business were 35%, and those who established their own businesses because they were not satisfied with their job were 15%. Among females who owned businesses, about 55% started their own business because they had no other jobs, while among males-owned businesses, only 34% started their own business because they had no job. A possible explanation for this might be that they were pushed to start businesses to generate income to satisfy their needs since they could not find a job in the labour market.

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics for effect of gender equality on private businesses' performance

Table8 depicts the effect of gender equality on the performance of private businesses in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda.

Table 8: Assessing the effect of gender equality on the private business performance.

| Gender equality effect on business performance | Obs. | Mean | Std. dev. | Interpretation | Rank of severity |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Both women and men with the same required business managerial experience, skills, and knowledge have a great influence on the good productivity and performance of the business's annual turnover | 100 | 4.25 | 0.995 | Very high level | 2 ND |
| Both women and men with the same education and entrepreneurial training levels can strongly contribute to the success of the business | 100 | 4.22 | 0.974 | Very high level | 3 RD |
| Women and men with equal sufficient business employed capital, their businesses can strongly contribute to the increase of job opportunities. | 100 | 4.30 | 0.911 | Very high level | 1 ST |
| Women and men with the same working capital management skills have a great effect on the growth of business annual income | 100 | 4.19 | 0.873 | high level | 4 TH |

Source: Primary data,2022

Table 8 indicates that the majority of the respondents agree at a very high level (Mean =4.30 and STD=0.91) with the idea that males and females with equal sufficient business employed capital, their businesses can strongly contribute to the growth of job creation. They also agree at a very high level (Mean =4.25 and STD=0.99) that males and females with the same required managerial experience, skills, and knowledge can strongly influence the good productivity and performance of the business annual turnover. This table also shows that the majority of respondents agree at a very high level (Mean =4.22 and STD=0.97) that males and females with the same education and entrepreneurial training level can strongly contribute to the success of the business. Finally, the results from this table reveal the majority of respondents agree at a high level (Mean =4.19 and STD=0.87) that males and females with the same working capital management skills have a positive effect on the growth of business annual income. Therefore, gender equality positively influences business performance.

4.2.3 Inferential statistics for effect of gender equality on private businesses' performance

Table 9 summarizes the test statistics for effect of gender equality on the performance of businesses.

Table 9: Chi-Square test for the effect of gender equality on the performance of businesses

| | Both women and men with the same required business managerial experience, skills, and knowledge have a great influence on the good productivity and performance of the business's annual turnover. | Both women and men with the same education and entrepreneurial training levels can strongly contribute to the success of the business | Women and men with equal sufficient business employed capital, their businesses can strongly contribute to the increase of job opportunities. | Women and men with the same working capital management skills have a great effect on the growth of business annual income |
|--------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 110.300 ^a | 104.700 ^a | 112.900 ^a | 98.900 ^a |
| df | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Asymp. Sig. | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |

Source: Primary data,2022

The findings from Table 9 show that both females and males with the same required business managerial experience, skills, and knowledge have a great influence on the good productivity and performance of the business annual turnover, has statistically significant with ($\chi^2(2) = 110.300$, sign=0.000<0.05). Both women and men with the same education and entrepreneurial training levels can strongly contribute to the success of the business, has statistically significant with ($\chi^2(2) = 104.700$, sign=0.000<0.05). Women and men with the equal sufficient business employed capital, their businesses can strongly contribute to the increase of job opportunities, this has statistically significant with ($\chi^2(2) = 112.900^a$, sign=0.000<0.05), and Women and men with the same working capital management skills have a great effect on the growth of business annual income, has statistically significant with ($\chi^2(2) = 98.900$, sign=0.000<0.05). In all tests of significance just generated, Asymptotic Significance, or p-value is less than 0.05, the p-value in our chi-square output is p = 0.000, we can confirm that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the statistics test has provided enough evidence that the relationship between gender equality and performance of private businesses is statistically significant.

4.2.4 Descriptive statistics for Key factors that severely affect the performance of private businesses owned by females and males

This section compares the similarities and differences between businesses owned by male and female regarding on critical working environment, business infrastructures, Market conditions, government regulations and financial factors. It clarifies and ranks the descriptive statistics computed based on the factors that severely affect the performance of the businesses owned by males and females by the means and standard deviations of scores. The results in terms of means and standard deviation obtained from the whole business owners are shown in the following tables. Table10 compares the similarities

and differences between businesses owned by male and female concerning the critical working environment factors that can restrain the performance of private businesses in Nyarugenge District.

Table 10: Working environment factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females.

| Severe Working environment factors | Male | | | | Female | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|---|
| | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation |
| 1. Workplace conflicts | 47 | 2.74 | 0.896 | 2 nd => <i>Moderate level</i> | 53 | 2.96 | 0.939 | 2 nd => <i>Moderate level</i> |
| 2. Current working place is not convenient for producing and selling products | 47 | 2.66 | 0.984 | 3 rd => <i>Moderate level</i> | 53 | 2.47 | 0.972 | 3 rd => <i>low level</i> |
| 3. COVID-19 and other pandemics | 47 | 4.45 | 0.928 | 1 st => <i>Very high level</i> | 53 | 4.30 | 1.030 | 1 st => <i>Very high level</i> |
| Average mean index | 47 | 3.28 | 0.938 | | 53 | 3.24 | 0.980 | |

Source: Primary data,2022

The results from Table 10 indicates that the majority of respondents (\bar{x} =4.45, SD =0.928 for males, and \bar{x} =4.30, SD =1.030 for females) declared that the biggest critical factor among working environment factors that had critically affected their businesses performance at a very high level was COVID-19. The mean scores and standard deviations as shown in Table10, reveal that the remaining severe working environment factors had affected the performance of businesses owned by males and females at moderate and low levels. Table11 illustrates the key market condition factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by females and males. It compares the similarities and differences between businesses owned by male and female regarding the critical market condition factors that can be an obstacle to the performance of private businesses.

Table 11: Market condition factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females.

| Severe market condition Factors | Males | | | | Females | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|---|
| | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation |
| 1. Instability of market price | 47 | 4.40 | 0.613 | 1 st => <i>Very high level</i> | 53 | 4.34 | 0.918 | 2 nd => <i>Very high level</i> |
| 2. Low demand for products and services | 47 | 4.28 | 0.615 | 2 nd => <i>Very high level</i> | 53 | 4.38 | 0.882 | 1 st => <i>Very high level</i> |
| 3. High competition | 47 | 4.19 | 0.680 | 3 rd => <i>high level</i> | 53 | 4.28 | 0.793 | 3 rd => <i>Very high level</i> |
| Average mean index | 47 | 4.29 | 0.636 | | 53 | 4.33 | 0.864 | |

Source: Primary data,2022

The results from Table 11 show that the biggest critical factors among severe market condition factors that affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females in Nyarugenge District at the same very high level are instability of market price, and low demand for products and services. The high competition factor was reported by the majority of males owned businesses (\bar{x} =4.19, SD =0.680) that it severely affects the performance of their business performance at a high level, while it was reported by females owned businesses that it affects their business performance at a very high level (\bar{x} =4.28, SD =0.793). Table12 depicts the key government regulation factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by females and males. This table also compares the similarities and differences between businesses owned by male and female regarding the severe government regulation factors that can restrain the performance of these businesses.

Table 12: Government regulation factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females

| Severe government regulation Factors | Males | | | | Females | | | |
|--|-----------|-------------|--------------|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|---|
| | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation |
| 1. High taxes | 47 | 4.47 | 0.545 | 1 St => <i>Very high level</i> | 53 | 4.53 | 0.723 | 1 St => <i>Very high level</i> |
| 2. Lack of market information | 47 | 3.06 | 0.941 | 3 rd => <i>Moderate level</i> | 53 | 3.42 | 0.907 | 3 rd => <i>high level</i> |
| 3. Unclear rules concerning businesses | 47 | 3.74 | 0.871 | 2 nd => <i>high level</i> | 53 | 3.70 | 0.932 | 2 nd => <i>high level</i> |
| Average mean index | 47 | 3.75 | 0.785 | | 53 | 3.88 | 0.854 | |

Source: Primary data,2022

The results from Table 12 reveal that the biggest critical factors among severe government regulation factors that affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females in Nyarugenge District at the same very high level are high taxes (\bar{x} =4.47, SD=0.543 for males and (\bar{x} =4.53, SD=0.723 for females). The mean scores (\bar{x} =3.74, SD =0.871 for males and \bar{x} =3.70, SD =0.932 for females) reveal that unclear rules concerning businesses, critically affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females at the same high level. Lack of market information affects the performance of businesses owned by males at a moderate level, while it affects the performance of businesses owned by females at the high level. Table13 displays the key infrastructure factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by females and males. It compares the similarities and differences between businesses owned by male and female regarding on severe infrastructure factors that can restrain the performance of these businesses.

Table 13: Infrastructure Factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females

| Severe infrastructure factors | Males | | | | Females | | | |
|--|-----------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation |
| 1. High rent/cost of business facilities | 47 | 4.32 | 0.593 | 1 st =>very high level | 53 | 4.21 | 0.840 | 1 st =>very high level |
| 2. Poor business facilities | 47 | 3.43 | 0.853 | 4 th =>high level | 53 | 3.42 | 0.886 | 4 th => high level |
| 3. Absence of own premises | 47 | 3.89 | 0.758 | 2 nd => high level | 53 | 3.75 | 0.874 | 3 rd => high level |
| 4. High transport service | 47 | 3.60 | 0.924 | 3 rd => high level | 53 | 3.91 | 0.814 | 2 nd => high level |
| Average mean index | 47 | 3.81 | 0.0782 | | 53 | 3.82 | 0.854 | |

Source: Primary data,2022

The results from Table 13 indicate that the biggest critical factor among severe infrastructure factors that affect businesses owned by males and females in Nyarugenge District at the same very high level is high rent of premises (\bar{x} =4.32, SD =0.593 for males and \bar{x} =4.21, SD =0.840 for females). The mean scores as shown by Table13 also reveal that poor business facilities, absence of own premises and high transport service are other severe infrastructures factors that critically impede the performance of businesses owned by males and females at the same high level. Table14 displays the key financial factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by females and males. It also compares the similarities and differences between businesses owned by male and female concerning the severe financial factors that can restrain the performance of private businesses.

Table 14: Financial factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females

| Severe financial factors | Males | | | | Females | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|--|
| | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation | Obs | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation |
| 1. Insufficient employed capital | 47 | 4.21 | 0.550 | 1 st => <i>very high level</i> | 53 | 4.01 | 0.866 | 1 st => <i>high level</i> |
| 2. Financial institution's high collateral requirements | 47 | 4.12 | 0.646 | 3 rd => <i>high level</i> | 53 | 3.92 | 0.851 | 2 nd => <i>high level</i> |
| 3. The high-interest rate charged by financial institutions | 47 | 4.21 | 0.658 | 2 nd => <i>very high level</i> | 53 | 3.92 | 0.805 | 3 rd => <i>high level</i> |
| 4. Lack of financial management skills | 47 | 2.72 | 1.078 | 4 th => <i>moderate level</i> | 53 | 2.75 | 0.950 | 4 th => <i>moderate level</i> |
| Average mean index | 47 | 3.81 | 0.733 | | 53 | 3.65 | 0.870 | |

Source: Primary data,2022

The findings from Table 14 indicate that the biggest critical factors among financial factors that affect the performance of businesses owned by males in Nyarugenge District at a very high level are insufficient employed capital ($\bar{x} = 4.21$, $SD = 0.550$), and the high-interest rate charged by financial institutions ($\bar{x} = 4.21$, $SD = 0.658$), while they critically affect the performance of businesses owned by females at a high level. And financial institutions' high collateral requirements ($\bar{x} = 4.12$, $SD = 0.646$ for males, and $\bar{x} = 3.92$, $SD = 0.851$ for females) affect businesses owned by males and females at the same high level. Table 14 also shows that the lack of financial management skills can hinder the performance of businesses owned by males and females at the same moderate level ($\bar{x} = 2.72$, $SD = 1.078$ for males and $\bar{x} = 2.75$, $SD = 0.950$ for females). Table 15 compares the overall impact of all key severe factors already discussed in detail above. Even though, all the above-mentioned factors can critically affect the performance of businesses owned by females and males, but this does not necessarily mean that all have the same negative impact level.

Table 15: Comparison of major factors that severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females.

| Factors | Male | | | | Female | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|------|-----------|---------------------------------------|--------|------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| | Obs. | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation | Obs. | Mean | Std. dev. | The rank of severity & Interpretation |
| Working environment factors | 47 | 3.28 | 0.938 | 5 th =>Moderate level | 53 | 3.24 | 0.980 | 5 th =>Moderate level |
| Market condition Factors | 47 | 4.29 | 0.636 | 1 st => Very high level | 53 | 4.33 | 0.864 | 1 st => Very high level |
| Government regulation Factors | 47 | 3.75 | 0.785 | 4 th => high level | 53 | 3.88 | 0.854 | 2 nd => high level |
| Infrastructure factors | 47 | 3.81 | 0.078 | 2 nd => high level | 53 | 3.82 | 0.854 | 3 rd => high level |
| Financial factors | 47 | 3.81 | 0.733 | 3 rd => high level | 53 | 3.65 | 0.870 | 4 th => high level |

Source: Primary data,2022

Here, the researcher's main interest was to know the key factors that can severely affect the performance of businesses owned by males and females in Nyarugenge District. This helped the researcher to come up with suggestions and recommendations to overcome such severe factors. From Table15, the findings show that the majority of respondents ($\bar{x} = 4.29$, $SD = 0.639$ for males, and $\bar{x} = 4.33$, $SD = 0.864$ for females) reported that the market condition factors are the biggest critical factors that affect their businesses performance at a very high level. Table15 also depicts that the majority of respondents declared that infrastructure, financial, and government regulation factors are another big obstacle hindering the performance of their businesses at a high level. Working environment factors are reported by males and females owned businesses as the factors that critically affect their businesses performance at a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 3.28$, $SD = 0.938$ for males, and $\bar{x} = 3.24$, $SD = 0.980$ for females). These findings are in line with the study results of Mulugeta (2011) and Asama *et al.*, (2015) who found that unfair competition, onerous laws, policies, and government or industry regulation regulations, an inadequate tax system, a lack of access to external financing, and a lack of human resource capacity are the most significant limitations to the performance of business activities.

5.0 Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the impact of gender equality on private business performance in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda. The study revealed significant gender differences in business characteristics, with female-owned businesses using lower capital, having limited experience and business skills, and lower business income than male-owned businesses. Female-owned businesses also employ fewer employees than male-owned businesses. The study's statistical tests provided evidence of a statistically significant relationship between gender equality and the performance of private businesses. The study identified several challenges that severely affect the performance of both

male and female-owned businesses, including COVID-19, high taxes, low demand for products and services, instability of market price, high competition, high rent of premises, insufficient employed capital, high-interest rates charged by financial institutions, and financial institutions' high collateral requirements. The study concluded that female and male-owned businesses in Nyarugenge District face similar business challenges, and addressing these issues will require joint efforts from business owners, government, stakeholders, and researchers. The findings suggest that policy interventions that promote equal access to resources and opportunities for male and female entrepreneurs can help address the gender gap in private business and promote economic growth in the region. The study's findings have implications for policymakers and business leaders, highlighting the need to address the challenges facing female-owned businesses and promote gender equality in private business. The findings also underscore the importance of addressing broader issues, such as high taxes and financial institutions' high collateral requirements, that affect the performance of private businesses in the region. In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the impact of gender equality on private business performance in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda.

6.0 Recommendations

The study provides recommendations based on the findings of the study on the impact of gender equality on private business performance in Nyarugenge District, Rwanda. The recommendations focus on addressing the challenges facing female-owned businesses and promoting equal access to resources and opportunities for male and female entrepreneurs. The study recommends that business owners, especially women with lower startup capital, should approach financial institutions for support in promoting their businesses. This recommendation is essential as it will help female-owned businesses to access the capital they need to grow their businesses, create employment opportunities, and contribute to economic growth. In addition, the study recommends that female-owned businesses should join and create cooperatives with their counterparts. This recommendation is crucial because it will allow female entrepreneurs to share business challenges, experiences, and incentives of working together. By forming cooperatives, female-owned businesses can access resources, such as training, finance, and networks, that are critical for business success.

Further, the study recommends that financial institutions should facilitate and encourage businesswomen to obtain bank loans to grow their businesses. This recommendation is crucial as it will help to promote equal access to finance for both male and female entrepreneurs, enabling them to access the capital they need to grow their businesses and create employment opportunities. Lastly, the study recommends that the government should consider these recommendations and provide support in eradicating the identified business challenges. The government's support is essential in promoting equal access to resources and opportunities for male and female entrepreneurs, enabling them to grow their businesses and contribute to economic growth. The recommendations highlight the need for policymakers, business leaders, financial institutions, and other stakeholders to work together to promote gender equality in private business and promote economic growth in the region.

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