

Review

# The Dichotomy in the Economic Development of Hausa People in Kano, Nigeria: Insight from Norms, Beliefs and Traditions of the Society

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**Abstract:** Kano State in Nigeria was known to hold a prestigious position as the center of commerce for the nation, economic nerve centre of the Hausas region, and established route for the then well-known Trans-Saharan trade. However, disturbing poverty and unemployment rate were at their peak though given the expectation that entrepreneurial activities of the Hausa people would be effective enough to generate employment opportunities and boost economic activities in the region. Therefore, this study explored on the dichotomous issue in the economic development of the Hausa people in Kano, taking a peep through the society, norms and beliefs of the Hausa people. Literature review was conducted in order to identify those norms, beliefs, traditions of the society that were believed to be significant in retarding the development and progress of the Hausa people. One of the key findings of the study is that women economic development of the Hausa populace has remained at its lowest ebb. In conclusion, a cultural shift was therefore advocated in order to attain a more progressive economic development of Hausa people in Kano.

**Keywords:** Economy; Economic Development; Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship Development; Norms; Society; Beliefs; Hausa; Kano State.

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## 1. Introduction

Sheriff and Muffatto (2015) averred that successful entrepreneurship stimulates the development of formal capital markets and thus is a force for better regulation and governance. Successful entrepreneurship sometimes creates clusters that in turn tend to make regions more competitive. Successful entrepreneurship can even impact political-economic systems, as in Israel's transition from a socialist to capitalist environment in the 1990s. However, though historically even before the colonial period, Kano State was known to hold that prestigious position as a center of commerce and an established way for the then well-known Trans-Saharan trade. So also, as the economic nerve centre of the Hausas, it is recognised due to the superiority attached with the Hausas as being regarded with intellectuality and physical strength, compared to other ethnic groups of equatorial Africa. Hence, given this phenomenon, it was expected that entrepreneurship development of the Hausa people would be effective enough to generate employment opportunities and boost economic activities in the region, but that was not the case as poverty and unemployment were at their peak there. Meanwhile, among other ethnicities involved in enterprising activities in Kano, their entrepreneurial development showed a vibrant tendency even though there are settlers, not indigenous.

Notwithstanding, according to the report by Ihugba, Odii and Njoku (2013) of firms that shut down in 2009 in the country, Kano and Kaduna axis appeared to have the highest rate of closure as states after Lagos which usually had the highest number of companies in the country as 176 firms were reported closed down in the northern states of Kano and Kaduna manufacturing zone.

Additionally, there exists contradiction between western concept of entrepreneurship and Hausa due to norms and beliefs that are inimical to the modern, conventional wisdom which has contributed to the inefficiency in business conduct in northern Nigeria. This is confirmed in Halliru (2013) in essence, the northern entrepreneur is not necessarily driven by the fear of not succeeding since hard work does not always bring fortune. This is contrary to the position of Mangwende *et al* (2011) who argue that fear of failure for entrepreneurs is a predictor of performance.

Therefore, this paper was aimed at highlighting the significance of Kano as the economic capital of the Hausa region and elucidating on the entanglement of norms, traditions and beliefs of the society. The proceeding sections would dwell on the related concepts of this study, introducing the reader to the significance of Kano, followed by knowing who the Hausa people are, then their norms, beliefs and traditions, and lastly economic activities of the Hausa women.

## 2. Development of Kano State, Nigeria.

Kano is a northern Nigerian state capital bearing the same name and is predominantly Moslem. Kano, Nigeria was founded over a millenium ago, in the same era as the rise of Islam. The first 500 years of growth were based upon African customs and indigenous adaptations to the environment. In the 14th century Islam was introduced and slowly became a greater force and a more significant part of the society. By the time the British captured the city in 1903, Islam was widely accepted and was an integral part of the culture. Kano is an ancient city of some five million people in northern Nigeria, Africa's largest country. Its people are Hausa-speaking and belong to Nigeria's largest subnational ethnic group. The population is 98% Muslim, and the city has long been considered a center of Islamic learning as well as the most important industrial and commercial center in that part of the country (Mambula, 2010). According to National Bureau of statistics (2017) Kano has the highest population as per state with a population of 13, 076, 982.

Kano was founded before the seventh century and the rise of Islam as a settlement of blacksmiths that were smelting iron at Dala Hill, an ironstone outcrop. Over the next few centuries the city grew in size but remained quite small and unprotected. The Wangarawa were drawn to Kano because of the trans-Saharan trade which extended all over north and west Africa. They sought gold and ivory which were obtainable in Kano from points further to the south and southeast and acted as Muslim missionaries. Hausa (or Habe) traders were the first to adopt Islam since it aided in the conduct of their trade and exchanges (Frishman, 1986). By the time the British conquered the city in 1903, most residents were practicing Muslims. The British instituted a policy of indirect rule which included a tolerance and respect for the right of Muslims to practice their own religion. Islam continued to spread during colonialism as an alternative to the Christian conquerers so that by 1952, 98% of the citizens of Kano State were identified as Muslims (Zakaria, 2001).

During the sixteenth century, economic and political innovations may have led to the development of local leather and textile manufacturing in some Hausa states, initially in Kano, Zamfara and Gobir (Ramusio, 1554). This century saw the rise of Kano as the richest and most important commercial centre of Hausaland, and many North African traders started to settle in the city (Candotti, 2010).

Moreover, cotton cloth started to be bought by Tuareg traders in Kano in exchange for salt, copper and luxury foreign cloth. As reported by Leo Africanus (Ramusio 1554: 84): Most of Zaria's cotton was transported by wealthy merchants to Kano, where the purchasing power of local weavers was much greater (NAK Kano Prof., acc. 2568). Most of Zaria's cotton was transported by wealthy merchants to Kano, where the purchasing power of local weavers was much greater (NAK Kano Prof., acc. 2568).

The great attraction of textiles produced in the Kano emirate was their competitive price, making it possible to export them to very distant areas. During the nineteenth century, however, two major changes occurred in the textile production of the emirate. Kano's popularity as a market was due to a series of commercial incentives and the greater regulation of market transactions (Denham and Clapperton 1966/1826).

At the end of the nineteenth century, cloth dyed in Kano was sold all over Borno and the Caliphate textiles reached such distant places as Baghirmi, the western coasts of the Atlantic, Tripoli and Lagos from where they were exported even to Brazil where they were required by the slave populations that had been deported during the previous centuries. Kano was noted unique for its gigantic stone walls, as one of the three cities of Africa (together with Fez and Cairo) where one could purchase any item (Undiran, 2012). Another scholar, Barth made detailed notes on the historical traditions, trade and manufacture of places such as Kano, Katsina and Zinder. The long-standing organisation of trade and extensive links of the Hausa cities emerge through many European reports. A well-cited example is that of Hugh Clapperton who, upon making his entry into Kano in January 1824, was disappointed to find that his foreign appearance was not a novelty, and that items of European trade had preceded him (Palmer 1928).

The income of Hausa men in Kano varies greatly, and neighborhoods are not segregated according to income level. In general, the size of households varies with income, more affluent men having more wives, children, dependent relatives, and clients. The close correlation between household size and income reflects the obligation of the male household head to provide for dependents. (Schildkrout, 1982).

Additionally, Hausa traders pioneered groundnut exports from Northern Nigeria partly by taking the initiative of becoming important early growers of groundnuts for export, via estates that they initially cultivated using slave labor. margarine production stimulated a 'new demand' for groundnuts in Europe between 1906 and 1914. In part because of this 'new demand' and the better profit opportunities it soon presented, Kano traders, whose operations were based on a system of clientage, took several measures to ensure that a large amount of the crop would be grown, at the expense of cotton. Specifically, they employed propaganda by sending their clientage agents into the countryside to spread news, directly via village headmen and traders in village and hamlet markets, about, among other things, the relatively high profit that could be obtained by selling nuts. They also recruited village heads to act as agents in popularizing particular clientage networks at harvest time. Finally, Kano traders often sent agent-buyers to outlying areas, not only to identify hardworking and honest farmers but also to encourage such individuals to grow more groundnuts, in part by assuring them of instant purchase and/or by handling credits and/or gifts to them (Salau, 2010).

Similarly, FDI has been not been attractive to other foreign investors from the developed world, apart from the Lebanese who had been the largest foreign investors who were not afraid, discouraged and were able to adapt to Nigerian business culture. Many of them have been in Nigeria since the early 1970s and longer. The largest Lebanese community is located in Kano. Many of the early Lebanese small and medium businesses in Nigeria started out as traders and retailers of consumer goods. Slowly they have graduated to small-scale manufacturing and food packaging for the Nigerian consumer market and for export (Mambula, 2010). In Kano today, the emphasis of traditional Hausa culture remains on inherited family status, stratification of classes, ascription of roles, and continuity of institutions (Zakaria, 2001).

The next section would highlight who the people referred to as "Hausa" are in Nigeria and their society.

## 2. Who Are The Hausa People and their Society?

'Hausa' is primarily a name, a label with at least three distinct histories: one stands for the Chadic language being referred to as Hausa; another one is for the various peoples the label has referred to over the centuries, first since it was initially coined and then during the period when it became

generally used for a specific language-group; and the third one is for the area(s) one might call Hausaland (or kasar Hausa) (Last, 2010).

Hausa is the largest spoken language in Black Africa; spoken from Dakar to Port Sudan and from Leopoldville in Central Africa to Birfraz-Fez in Morocco. It is spoken by more than eighty million people who are not necessarily Hausa by origin (El-Nafty, (2013). Generally, the Hausa people do communicate in the Hausa language, a language being widely spoken over the Sub-Saharan region of West Africa. They are locally called "Hausawa" as the ethnic people of Hausaland. The Hausa people's being to existence is a topic being debated for a long time by scholars giving variant forms of historical myths; whether they were descendants of Bayajidda and his adventure to Daura or its either their connection with Ethiopia. Nevertheless, several accounts had attributed the Hausas with some distinct traditions, who were historically known to be farmers. The Hausa land comprising of its people cut across regions where the language is spoken like in Northern Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, Cameroon, Chad, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Sudan, CAR, Congo, Eritrea, Germany (Gandu, 2016). Hausa covers most of the northern and western extent of the family, across northern Nigeria and into southern Niger. Chadic languages also extend into northern Cameroon and western and southcentral parts of the Chad Republic, and hitherto unknown languages are still occasionally discovered (Jaggar, 2010). However, the Hausa people of the northern Nigeria, in Hausaland, which as claimed by Masquelier, (2000) other indigenous Hausa ethno-cultural descendants as well as Hausa speaking people from the other places regard those from northern Nigeria as the real "Hausa".

Hausa people mostly reside in West Africa today, or in northern region of Nigeria, or in southern Niger. They make up one of the biggest and highly influential indigenous ethnic people in Africa, and whereby their language known as Hausa is spoken by as much as fifty million people, and stands as lingua franca in West Africa. The Hausa culture and the environment is basically based on Islamic settings, though a very small percentage of Hausa could be found as Maguzawa (animist mostly) (Coles, & Mack, 1991). Today, a larger chunk of Hausa-speakers live in northern Nigeria (Ogundiran, 2012). The Hausa community and its culture are said to be complex in nature possessing different aspects of life that are on the extremes: whether in urban and rural settings, agriculture and highly specialized craft production etc. The Hausaland has been a melting pot of commercial activities, civilisation and cosmopolitan centre for a long time, where the Hausa traders would travel all over the places from north, to east and also west Africa, and also on pilgrimage sojourn (Hajj) to Mecca. Equally, the Hausa usually carry along their cultural affairs and language, which in turn affect the cultural and social settings of the settled place (Coles & Mack, 1991).

Importantly, Islam has remained their creed, which has made their connection with the Arabs in Islamic matters and religious activities closer (Gandu, 2016; Ologunwa, (2014). Their major occupation remains trading, agriculture and small-scale commerce (Louis, & Osemeke, (2017). The Hausa people are involved in some unique crafts among which include skin and hide and tannery, blacksmith, pottery, weaving, and Handcrafted, textiles Ologunwa, (2014). The introduction of Islam into Hausa land has really influenced their material and non-material culture in terms of family matters, clothing, arts, architecture, housing, and human habitation, occupation, and tradecrafts (Muhammad, 1989; Zalanga, 2000).

## **2.5 Women and their Economy in Hausa Land, Nigeria.**

As part of introducing more knowledge to the reader about Hausa land, thus, the researchers find it imperative to highlight the women economic activities in Hausaland. Hausaland has been historic where it produced women luminaries such as the queens of Daura-Daurama and queen Amina of Zazzau who led key positions in the society of men (Zakaria, 2001). Hausaland is one major area in the whole of Africa where the seclusion of adult females is strictly practised as a cultural norm. In particular, the emirates of northern Nigeria are at the forefront of enforcing the strict compliance with purdah (seclusion) in contrast to most Islamic societies in Africa, including the Arab north.

In comparing female-male relationships in Kano with those in other parts of the Islamic world, one is struck by the strength and the particular form of the institution of purdah in northern Nigeria. In Kano city, which by any account is economically stratified, few married women are not in seclusion. Even when husbands cannot fulfill all of their wives' and childrens' material needs, as they are enjoined to do by Islamic law, women are secluded. In some ways, the strictness with which seclusion is enforced in Kano (and probably elsewhere in northern Nigeria) appears to be greater than in other parts of the Islamic world. In North Africa, Morocco for example, women use the veil to segregate themselves from men and from public male space, but for women in Kano, however, rarely go out at all during the day, not even to go to market (Schildkrout, 1982).

The Hausa community in Kano is based on a patriarchal setting that bears a deep-rooted male characterised head of family affairs, where the men carry the most burden in taking care of the family's financial, feeding, security, health, and also educational needs which was imposed on them Islamically as well (Zakaria, 2001).

Equally, the employment of female workers in formal organisations was regarded by male workers as awkward. In Kano, Muslim men employing are quite careful and hesitant in taking female employees due to the cultural and religious challenge because of that decisions (Zakaria, 2001).

Additionally, in terms of financing, strategies for capital formation among female business groups include personal saving through rotating credit facilities or *adashe*, sometimes including a head of the pool, or *uwar adashe*, who is normally an older and more responsible woman in the community or household, to whom the women made their contributions. Credit facilities were disbursed at a time deemed appropriate or when a member was in critical need of money. This was because banks often discriminate against women, with the consequence that Muslim Hausa females who seek modern banking credit facilities are few. However, despite their adherence to seclusion norms, Hausa women, especially in Kano, sometimes do have international business connections. Some of their international business trips are seasonal and are conducted on Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca. This is significant because it provides simultaneous avenues for spiritual exaltation and personal economic opportunities. In more recent times, Hausa women with a substantial capital base have become actively engaged in international business with predominantly Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Egypt. (Zakaria, 2001).

Equally, Zakaria confirmed that the hidden productive business activities of home based restricted women in Hausa land provides a significant contribution towards GDP in Nigeria. Muslim women are frequently perceived as objects of pity often holding marginal and counterproductive statuses in their societies. The role of Muslim Hausa women reinforces the idea of gender asymmetry (Coles 1991). Although some scholars like Hill (1982: 84) held the notion about female home confinement of local women in Hausa region of northern Nigeria as a "terrible restriction of human liberty", others like Callaway (1987: 21) corrected that later, that female subjugation should be attributed to northern Nigeria as it should be considered as universal phenomenon across all societies.

Whereas the opinion of Barkow (1972) that the whole population in Hausaland constitutes about half of female composition and due to their comparatively low economic activities in the standard open market may cause societal retardation and degradation, was opposed by Zakaria, (2001) that the domicile economic transactions carried out by the Muslim Hausa women which are often ignored can shun the standard formal market and make massive inputs to the economic development of that society

"Misconceptions about the role of women in the Islamic society can only be extirpated by differentiating between the teachings of Islam as a religion and a way of life, and local customs and traditions which are often conceived as part of it" (AlMunajjed, 1997). The preponderance of evidence in northern Nigeria and from Hausa cultural practices does not show that assertions about female subjugation are valid.

## 2.4 Beliefs and Norms of Hausa

The value of a firm is shaped by the values of its leader, and the action of the leader determines the direction of the company (Louis, & Osemeke, 2017; Sabiu, 2018). Therefore, proverbs are regarded as the kernels that contain the wisdom of traditional people. They are philosophical and moral expositions shrunk to a few words and they form a mnemonic device in societies in which everything worth knowing and relevant to day-to-day life has to be committed to memory".

In northern Nigeria, there exists certain customs or norms ingrained in the traditional proverbs or adage that prevalent in the society and have strong effect on the attitudes, perceptions and behavior towards work, strive, fate and success. For instance, there are proverbs that encourage hard work and aim for higher achievement, while some other proverbs seem to promote laidbackness. Example of proverbs that propagate that everything in life is ordained by God not by someone's hard work can be seen in proverbs such as: "zafin nema baya kawo samu" which literally means "intensity of search does not bring earning" and which in its real meaning suggests "hard work does not always bring fortune (Yakubu, 2005; Halliru, 2013) "randa na daka Allah ke ba ta ruwa" with the literal meaning that "God provides water to a pot right inside the inner chamber of a house". While the real meaning informs that "Godly provision is not measured by hard labour". So also this next proverb that reads "Ana muzuru ana shaho, zakaran da Allah Ya nufa da cara sai ya yi", which literal meaning says "A rooster must crow even in the midst of the cat and the hawk", but in actual sense means "You get what belongs to you, come what may". Another one is "Sa'a ta fi sammako" which literally means "Luck is better than early rise", but in the real sense it implies "Luck is better than hard work". Equally, a proverb usually spoken is "Rabon kwado ba ya hawa sama" that literally translated as "Possession of a frog hardly goes up" and the true meaning suggest that "What belongs to you must surely come to you".

Nevertheless, on the other side of the coin, certain proverbs indicate the essence of hardwork and perseverance in attaining success in Hausa culture. Perhaps proverbs such as "Zomo ba ya kamuwa daga zaune" literally translated as "The rabbit cannot be captured in a sitting position", and in real meaning reads that "Fortune requires hard work". Similarly, "Ba a shan zuma sai an sha harbi" is another proverb that is literally translated as "One cannot get honey without a bee sting", which actually means "No pain, no gain" (Yunusa, 1977; Halliru, 2013). Interestingly, this proverb confirms how hardwork translates to success where it says "Kudi masu gidan rana" which could be literally translated as "Money dwells in the heat of the sun" and in its actual meaning suggests that "Success only comes after hard work" (Yunusa, 1977; Halliru, 2013). Time essence could also be deduced from this proverb that says "Da duku-duku ake kama fara, in rana ta yi sai ta tashi" which is literally translated as 'You can only catch the locust/grasshopper early in the morning because they disperse when the sun goes up" which in real meaning indicates that "Good planning is what ensures success". Furthermore, another proverb that signifies initiativeness or innovativeness which says "Mai arziki ko a Kwara ya sai da ruwa" which literal meaning is "A wealthy man can sell water even in the Kwara region (of the River Niger) but which in real means "With entrepreneurial skills, the unimaginable can happen" (Yunusa, 1977; Halliru, 2013).

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has contributed into highlighting the significance and relevance of Kano state as a stronghold of economic activities both in Nigeria and for the Hausa region. The paper has equally given description on who the people of Hausa are and their society, the economic activities of their women, their belief and norms. Hence, the significance of this paper could be deduced from the contributions made into illuminating the surrounding circumstances of the dichotomy of the economic development of Kano via the lens of the society, its norms and beliefs.

It is therefore the intention of this paper to highlight some significant recommendations that could be useful and emphasized by relevant stakeholders. It was reiterated by scholars that the doctrines of Islam and Hausa cultural and norms abhor idleness. That is why, "a woman in her child

bearing years without a trade is an anomaly, so too an old woman without her own financial resources is an object of pity" (Coles & Mack 1991). The Hausa community is really an encouraging ground for the women to be actively engaged economically in their homes (Zakaria, 2001). The chunk of Hausa population especially in Kano are female and mostly underutilized because of heavy restrictions and cultural stereotyping of the women. Therefore, in as much as culture remains important, valuable and should be preserved by the people of a society, which the researchers equally support, but moderation is also required where the culture has tendency of retarding development and progress. Hence, women need to be empowered and liberated in the society by designing a workable framework to incorporate the potential economic contribution that could be delivered by women. Education remains vital in the society, training and more appropriate policies for the advancement and progress of the Hausa society and strengthening the economy, and revive the prestige as well glory of Kano state and the whole nation. Similarly, cultural shift that entails reprogramming, re-orienting and resetting the minds of the people towards modern way of thinking on developmental issues and economic development of the Hausa people and Nigeria at large.

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