Shattering the Second Glass Ceiling:
Interpreting the lived experiences of Female Entrepreneurs in Lagos, Nigeria, using Schlossberg’s Transition Theory.

Abosed Olufunmilola Amusan

Main field of study: Leadership and Organization
Degree: Master of Arts (120 ECTS) with a major in Leadership and Organisation
Focus & Credits: Master thesis with a focus on Leadership and Organisation: Societal Challenges and Organisational Changes (OL675E), 30 ECTS.
Semester: Spring 2022
Supervisor: Kenneth Jørgensen
Title: Shattering the second glass ceiling: Interpreting the lived experiences of Female Entrepreneurs in Lagos, Nigeria, using Schlossberg’s Transition Theory.

Author: Abosede Olufunmilola Amusan

University: Malmö University

Main field of study: Leadership and Organization

Subject: Master Thesis with a focus on Leadership and Organisation: Societal Challenges and Organisational Changes (OL675E), 30 ECTS

Type of Degree: Degree of Master of Arts (120 ECTS) with a Major in Leadership and Organisation

Period: Spring 2023

Supervisor: Kenneth Mølbjerg Jørgensen
Acknowledgment

I have to thank God, my Heavenly Father, because without Him, I am nothing, and completing this thesis would not have become a reality. Because I know I can accomplish all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens me (Holy Bible, New King James Version, Philippians 4:13), my confidence in God was greater than my fears. I'm on this planet to devote my entire being to serving God.

I want to express my gratitude to my husband, who is my biggest supporter and my true love, Abraham Kolawole Amusan. He is always there to give me words of encouragement, a shoulder to cry on, and a joke to make me laugh. No matter what ideas or goals I have, he reassures me that I can accomplish them. To my intelligent and beautiful daughters, Araoluwa Kitiitan and Boluwatife Amusan, thank you for making the combination of motherhood, work, and studies smooth and easy for me. You mean the world to me. I have a sincere appreciation for my siblings and friends. You all would pray for me, call and check on my progression, and listen to me rant and discuss the ups and downs of my experiences as I went through the process of obtaining my master’s degree.

Finally, I'd want to thank my fellow students for helping to make my two-year study journey enjoyable. I will always be grateful to my thesis supervisor, Prof. Kenneth Jørgensen for his generosity in helping me develop my thesis into a noteworthy research study worthy of scholarly effort. I'm grateful.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis in loving memory of my mother, the Late Mrs. Blessing Ngozi Oladinni (Nee Onuoha), who I am sure is proud of me for attaining this educational feat, which I have always wanted to do when she was alive. She was the first female entrepreneur that I knew, as she was a self-employed plastic bag small-scale manufacturer. She did this to support herself and the family while we (my siblings and I) were young. She taught me valuable lessons about being a woman trying to succeed in a world that does not see you as an equal. She instilled confidence in me, never to quit and work for what I want. She always told me “God always watches over you and will always provide for you.”

Finally, this is for every woman and anyone who wants to own a business or accomplish a goal. As you face adversities or challenges, do not waver, because you have what it takes, you were made for this, even if others do not support you. Believe in your abilities and possibilities, have faith in God that He will help you do the rest even when you think you cannot go further.
Abstract

Introduction: This study examined the lived experiences of Female Entrepreneurs in Lagos State, Nigeria, who transitioned from traditional corporate employment settings to venture into uncharted entrepreneurial territory. In their transition from employee to entrepreneur, this study identified the existence of glass ceiling in both phases. Considering the perception of a woman’s identity in the Nigerian patriarchal system, practical attention and analysis have not been given to their experiences as employees and entrepreneurs. Seven (7) Nigerian Female Entrepreneurs with established businesses in Lagos, Nigeria, participated in this study.

Method: A qualitative research method that builds upon the philosophy of social constructivism was used to decipher the transition. Storytelling theory assisted the interviewees in expressing themselves freely and facilitated this research. Also, Schlossberg's Transition Theory was the foundational theoretical framework for this study.

Result: The result of the study identified the inherent glass ceiling in their transition. Some peculiarities of the glass ceiling within Nigerian context include financing barriers, gender discrimination, a good support system, and limited female mentors. This was framed as the “second glass ceiling”. They discussed their coping mechanisms to overcome challenges and build successful businesses during transition.

Conclusion: The conclusion demonstrates helpful modifications that can aid groups, organizations, academic institutions, and policymakers understand Nigerian women’s situation in corporate and business domains. Such understanding could promote equality of opportunity within society and organizations, eliminate entrepreneurship barriers, and aid their long-term retention of corporate or entrepreneurial engagement. In the long run, this will benefit the Nigerian economy, corporate organizations, female entrepreneurs in Nigeria, and their communities.

Keywords

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgment ........................................................................................................... iii
Dedication ......................................................................................................................... iv
Abstract ............................................................................................................................ v
List of Tables and Charts .................................................................................................. viii

1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1. Research Interest ................................................................................................. 3
   1.2. Research Question ............................................................................................. 4
   1.3. Female Entrepreneurs in Nigeria ......................................................................... 5
   1.4. Theoretical approach ......................................................................................... 6
   1.5. Research Objectives .......................................................................................... 7
   1.6. Study Overview/Chapterisation ......................................................................... 7

2. Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................. 9
   2.1. The Glass Ceiling Theory and Entrepreneurship ............................................. 9
   2.2. Glass Ceiling and Female Entrepreneurship in Nigeria ................................... 12
       2.2.1. Gender Bias and Discrimination ............................................................... 12
       2.2.2. Cultural and Societal Expectations ......................................................... 13
       2.2.3. Access to Funding .................................................................................... 13
       2.2.4. Limited Government Supports and Policies ........................................... 14
       2.2.5. Limited Networking and Mentorship Opportunities ............................... 15
   2.3. Schlossberg’s Transition Theory ......................................................................... 15
       2.3.1. Transition Theory Components ............................................................... 17

3. Methodology and Methods .......................................................................................... 21
   3.1. Qualitative Research .......................................................................................... 21
   3.2. Social Constructivism ....................................................................................... 22
   3.3. Storytelling ......................................................................................................... 23
   3.4. Entrepreneurial Storytelling ............................................................................... 24
   3.5. Data Collection ................................................................................................... 25
       3.5.1. Primary Sources ........................................................................................ 25
       3.5.2. Secondary Sources .................................................................................... 25
       3.5.3. Interviews ................................................................................................. 26
       3.5.4. Interview Selection Process ...................................................................... 26
   3.6. Data Analysis Method ........................................................................................ 27
   3.7. Research Reliability and Credibility .................................................................... 27
3.8. Overview of Interview ................................................................. 28
3.9. The Role of the Researcher .......................................................... 29
3.10. Ethical Consideration ................................................................. 30
4. Empirical Data Analysis and Findings .............................................. 31
4.1. Undervalued ................................................................................ 31
4.2. Gender Stereotyping, Social and Family Support ................................ 35
  4.2.1. Social and Family Support ...................................................... 35
  4.2.2. Gender Stereotyping ............................................................. 37
4.3. Ambition and Capability ............................................................... 39
  4.3.1. Educational and Social Status ................................................. 39
  4.3.2. Ambition and Sense of Fulfilment ........................................... 41
  4.3.3. Capability and Self-Development ............................................ 42
4.4. Struggles ................................................................................... 43
  4.4.1. Financial Challenges as a New Business Owner ......................... 43
  4.4.2. Authority Assertion and Female Leadership .............................. 44
  4.4.3. Independence and Competitiveness ........................................ 45
4.5. Summary of Findings .................................................................. 46
5. Discussion and Conclusion ............................................................... 48
  5.1. Schlossberg’s 4s Theory and the Naturally Emerged Themes ............ 48
    5.1.1. Theme 1: Undervalued ......................................................... 50
    5.1.2. Theme 2: Gender Stereotyping, Social and Family Support .......... 51
    5.1.3. Theme 3: Ambition and Capability ........................................ 53
    5.1.4. Theme 4: Struggles ............................................................ 55
  5.2. Discussion ............................................................................... 57
  5.3. Conclusion .............................................................................. 59
References ...................................................................................... 62
Appendix A: Interview Questions ......................................................... 71
Appendix B – Participant’s consent ....................................................... 73
List of Tables and Charts

Table 1: Summary of Participants’ Demography ................................................................. 29

Figure 1: Representation of Schlossberg’s four Systems of coping with transition. .......... 49
1. Introduction

The global economic scene has recently witnessed substantial financial contributions from entrepreneurial businesses. Notably, this success story recognizes female entrepreneurs' presence and contribution to increasing the global market index (GEM, 2020). Many of these female entrepreneurs were once employed in the traditional corporate environment. It suggests the proliferation of female entrepreneurs who exit the corporate world to own businesses (Salahuddin et al., 2022). It is perceived that women’s exit from the corporate workforce, and noticeable engagement in entrepreneurial adventures, are making loud statements that the corporate workplace – with its attendant closed networks and hierarchies- does not align (Daniel, 2004). However, this could also be traceable to women redefining and reassessing what career or workplace success, quality, and excellence mean to them (Mickels, 2014). To redefine their career and gain financial freedom, many women exit the corporate world to become entrepreneurs, probably to circumvent the glass ceiling experience they had in their corporate engagement (Salahuddin et al., 2022). Unfortunately, women who become entrepreneurs also encounter systemic gender bias that inhibits their business performance and growth (Bellucci et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the glass ceiling metaphor is a popular terminology used in the corporate sector to explain the existence of a career advancement obstruction, hindering aspiring women from attaining senior management positions in the corporate workplace (Kumra & Manfredi, 2012). According to Daniel (2004), the presence of an “invisible glass ceiling” impeding the career and professional advancements of some qualified and experienced women or minority groups accounts for their exiting the corporate workplaces in their numbers. Alternatively, while some women no longer gain satisfaction in their corporate careers, others derive their entrepreneurial drive intrinsically, which might be a fundamental reason for their interest in entrepreneurship (Mickels, 2014). Because transiting from employee to entrepreneur is a significant transition capable of disrupting an individual’s life events, it is interesting to inquire and understand the lived experiences of the female entrepreneurs while they were employees up until when they transited from paid employment to entrepreneurship and their entrepreneurial journeys. To understand this, Schlossberg’s transition theory is explored to properly dissect the different phases of their transition and examine how they coped.
For Schlossberg, transition represents any occurrence or non-occurrence that precipitates alterations in an individual’s routines, roles, assumptions, and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981). This theory provides a suitable framework to interpret the perceived challenges and coping techniques an individual engages in during significant life transitions. (Schlossberg, 1981). Thus, women exiting the workplace to become entrepreneurs, probably because of the trickle effects of the inherent patriarchal system, especially in Nigeria (Madichie, 2009), is a significant transition. In Nigeria, the deeply rooted patriarchal traditions in the cultural values and policies have been suggested to present additional roadblocks women face in their career advancement endeavours (Madichie, 2009).

Strong patriarchal concepts pervade social, cultural, religious, political, and economic arenas, resulting in women's lower social standing. This discourages women from making independent decisions, such as starting businesses (Mahadeo et al., 2015). Hence, they typically develop tiny, home-based businesses to support their families and escape financial difficulties. As a result, they are less likely to establish a formal, large-scale enterprise. Because it is widely perceived that they cannot create, run, and manage large business enterprises, they are only considered for minor loans by formal/informal financial institutions such as banks (Salahuddin et al., 2022). Thus, female entrepreneurs are more vulnerable to the “second glass ceiling” due to legal, financial, regulatory, and socioeconomic constraints (Coleman, 2010).

However, returning to the crux of this research, this study is centered on women who quit paid employment to become entrepreneurs, and this is interesting because it will provide an understanding of

a.) Glass ceiling experiences of these women while in corporate employment.

b.) How female entrepreneurs encounter the glass ceiling in becoming entrepreneurs, and

c.) The Nigerian context of the glass ceiling.

Additionally, women transitioning from employee to entrepreneur experience newfound perks and challenges in their new entrepreneurial adventure (Daniel, 2004). As a result, this research effort chronicles perceived challenges in the lived experiences of Nigerian women entrepreneurs living in Lagos state, Nigeria's southwestern region. This paper will accomplish this by analysing these lived experiences using Schlossberg's transition theory, employing
empirical data to investigate the perceived systemic gender bias that Nigerian women entrepreneurs may face in their daily entrepreneurial business activities, and, most importantly, highlighting their coping strategies during these transition processes. It will also slightly contrast whether shifting to entrepreneurship prevented them from encountering the glass ceiling as they did in their paid employment. This study aims to identify potential theoretical and academic implications to contribute to the research body on the examined issue. Also, understanding how they dealt with transitional problems, their lived experiences as entrepreneurs, and the interplay of events inside and outside their control is critical to deconstructing this research work's primary themes. In investigating this, Schlossberg’s transition theory will be engaged, using women entrepreneurs' decision to quit their job and start their businesses as a transition event.

1.1. Research Interest

The decision to start a business or become an entrepreneur may be complicated, considering the multiplicity of the market entry and operations determinant indices. This is categorically interesting, especially concerning an underrepresented gender in the economic world. More interesting, however, is that most female entrepreneurs were formally in the paid employment workforce before they decided to embark on becoming business owners. Also, this discourse becomes more engaging, particularly in a patriarchal society like Nigeria, where a woman’s value and importance seem to depend on the parameters of supportiveness, submissiveness, and subservience (Lawan, 2017), which can be classified subtly as - for lack of words-, a form of “societal glass-ceiling” syndrome.

Notably, the existence of these parameters suggests a societal glass ceiling, which may exist to scuttle the interest and efforts of Nigerian female entrepreneurs, especially the ones doing their business in the most commercial city of the country, Lagos state. Therefore, a quest for knowledge of the experiences of female entrepreneurs in Nigeria, with regards to the context of study in this thesis, particularly Lagos state, the country’s metropolitan city, is of astute appropriateness.

Given the socially constructed expectations of the “supposed” place of a Nigerian woman in society (Madichie, 2009), more importantly, the "career women", who were once employed but are now entrepreneurs owning businesses ranging from small to medium scale, I am interested
in deciphering their experiences through the lenses of their told stories. This is appropriate, however, to uncover their transition stories from paid employment to entrepreneurship, paying attention to their workplace experiences before deciding to become an entrepreneur, and connecting perceived manifestations of ‘glass ceiling’ syndrome in their professional work life to their newly chosen line of economic and social survival, entrepreneurship. To properly analyse these unfolding events, Schlossberg’s transition theory will be engaged thematically to the end that the external and internal components of their transition to entrepreneurship will be adequately understood, identifying the different expressions of the glass-ceiling effects across their paid employment (previous) and entrepreneurship (present) occupational experiences.

1.2. Research Question

This research seeks to understand the transition process of Nigerian female entrepreneurs into becoming business owners, identifying forms of glass ceiling syndrome in their entrepreneurial experiences. It aims to enable a proper and elaborate discussion and analysis to significantly uncover the thematic features in the experiences of Nigerian female entrepreneurs who were once engaged in paid employment. Understanding their struggles, success stories, and backgrounds will paint a clearer picture of their experiences. To this end, the crux of this research is to answer these research questions:

a.) What transitions have Nigerian female entrepreneurs gone through in moving from paid employment to becoming entrepreneurs?

b.) What can we learn from their experiences of transition to entrepreneurship from the perspective of the glass ceiling?

These female entrepreneurs may have had their fair share of career impediments (glass ceiling) in their paid jobs, which may have informed their decision to become an entrepreneur. Hence, they could see entrepreneurship as an escape route to stay aloof from these impediments. This makes studying their transition processes about coping strategies an expedient activity. These questions aim to identify their coping mechanisms in the transition process by taking stocks of cogent and defining occurrences responsible for their survival as entrepreneurs after quitting their jobs. It also seeks to evaluate their business growth and thriving expectations vis-à-vis their paid job experiences, considering the perceived and identified obstacles to advancement. Hence, storytelling becomes an essential tool in this research to listen to and
collect their stories carefully, observing the respondents’ disposition, body language, and tones to have a rich overview of these defining unfolding events.

### 1.3. Female Entrepreneurs in Nigeria

According to available female entrepreneurship literature, a female entrepreneur is a woman who takes inherent risks in coordinating resources in an excellent way to leverage some identified opportunities in her immediate environment through the production of goods and services (Okafor & Mordi, 2010). Interestingly, in Nigeria, women constitute over fifty percent (50%) of the population, and about thirty percent (30%) of registered business enterprises are women owned (Adetoyinbo, 2012). In Nigeria, for every ten working-age females, four are reported to engage in early-stage entrepreneurial activities, representing 40.7%, compared to 39% of their male counterparts (Nasimiyu, 2019). PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) research in 2020 reveals that female entrepreneurs represent about 41% of micro-business owners (PWC, 2020).

Unfortunately, these female-owned enterprises still experience an average growth rate, consistently at a low ebb compared to the growth rates of businesses owned by men (Ezebuilo, 2022). However, some economic and non-economic factors have been identified to account for the little or no growth recorded in businesses owned by women entrepreneurs. The prevalent economic factors include location, business size, profitability, growth, productivity, and education. In contrast, the non-economic factors are business environment, norms and culture, empowerment, lack of female entrepreneurial mentorship, lack of improved family and women’s welfare, and economic discrimination (Lawan, 2017).

Additionally, apart from these economic and non-economic factors, the fear of quasi-growth, higher level of intellectual capacity among females, the zeal for achieving work-life(family) balance, poor savings culture, inadequately qualified artisan workers, unfair business practices and lack of reliable and honest workforce; are other ascertained factors that inhibit the steady business progression of female entrepreneurs, especially in Nigeria (Lawan, 2017). To corroborate the ongoing discussion, other assertions were also made by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), through Data from the Future Business Survey (2018), which reports that the primary rationale behind female, in comparison with male entrepreneurs’ engagement in learning entrepreneurial businesses, and financing include:
discontentment with previous job, to be more independent, not having other employment, family tradition, interest to pursue hobby, identification of a market niche, the need to be more creative and make more money and to have a work-life balance. The intrinsic and extrinsic factors which have overarching consequences on the success of female-owned businesses further affirm the trickiness of the business world, revealing the embedded difficulties requiring top business skills and accuracy to scale the hurdles, which most female entrepreneurs do not possess (Mahmood, 2011).

1.4. Theoretical approach

In layperson's terms, a widely accepted definition of the glass ceiling metaphor is widely from the viewpoint of women’s economic and social marginalization, exemplified by women’s career growth impediments. The concentration on this view of the glass ceiling syndrome opens a discussion on the probability of it being responsible for Nigerian women’s transition into entrepreneurship from the corporate world (Lawan, 2017). Most important, therefore, in this context is the examination and analysis of the unfolding events and occurrences captured in their transition process from corporate employment to entrepreneurship.

Consequently, this study pays close attention to the lived experiences of these female entrepreneurs, particularly those based in Lagos State – the busiest commercial state in Nigeria - carefully noting their fears and worries neatly wrapped up in their determination to scale inhibiting hurdles to their economic and social relevance in the society during the transitioning process. Therefore, in this transition process, emphasis is given to the strategies implored, recognizing perceived manifestations of the "glass ceiling syndrome" through their told stories, narratives, and expressions of thoughts. So, it is safe to conclude that entrepreneurship as an act of becoming is transitory and transitive (Andersson & Starnawska, 2008).

The interpretative approach is utilized in this work to further make meaning of this study for adequate comprehension purposes. Andersson and Starnawska (2008) posited that the interpretative approach is the most applicable lens for viewing entrepreneurship to extend people’s understanding of the phenomena. However, researchers with interpretative inclinations highlight the significant connection between an entrepreneur's background and practices and their concept of entrepreneurship (Jones & Spicer, 2009).
However, previous research on entrepreneurship predicts that career advancement impediments somehow transcend the paid job workplace, with its replica playing out even in the entrepreneurial world. Hence, the general women stratification across major spheres, especially in Nigeria, can better be understood when we fully understand the experience of these female entrepreneurs in their transition to entrepreneurship, and being entrepreneurs, highlighting their coping mechanisms to chart a forward course. Thus, the term ‘transition’ is the fundamental terminological base on which this research work stands to find expression across other thematic contexts used in this research work. Schlossberg, (1995), defines transition as an occurrence or non-occurrence that informs changes in roles, relationships, assumptions, and routines (p. 27).

1.5. Research Objectives

Since there is a limited amount of research on this subject area, focused on the transition experience of Nigerian females quitting paid jobs to become entrepreneurs, hence, to decipher resemblances of glass ceiling syndrome, the objectives of this research work are as follows.

i. Contribute richly to, and in some cases, establish the body of knowledge and research for future studies that analyse the career transition of Nigerian females to entrepreneurship. In addition, this study aims to provide helpful information to respective government agencies saddled with the responsibility of formulating conducive policies to support female entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

ii. An exhaustive comprehension of the coping mechanisms female entrepreneurs in Lagos, Nigeria, engage in their transition to entrepreneurship.

iii. Identify semblances of glass ceiling occurrence in the entrepreneurship experiences of Nigerian female entrepreneurs residing in Lagos to determine how they conquer these obstacles.

1.6. Study Overview/Chapterisation

This chapter gave an exquisite overview of the problem, questions, and the purpose of this study. Chapter 2 reviews existing literature on the pivotal theoretical framework guiding this research work. The glass ceiling metaphor about female entrepreneurship in Nigeria’s context, transition theory, storytelling, and entrepreneurial storytelling theories are also reviewed in this chapter. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology engaged in this study, detailing the
research purpose, design, setting, interview questions, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 then proceeds to document the results and findings of the collected data and the analysis performed by the researcher. Finally, Chapter 5 draws the curtain by outlining the researcher’s conclusions based on the results. Also, in Chapter 5, discussion, recommendations, implications, and suggestions for future research were provided.
2. Theoretical Framework

This section of this paper will discuss the theoretical pillars upon which this work is established. Moreover, relevant theories for proper dissection and assimilation of the subject of study will be presented and analysed for proper framing and navigation. To this end, a proper analysis of the glass ceiling theory concerning entrepreneurship will be presented. Understanding the glass ceiling theory and female entrepreneurship in Nigeria will also be contextualized.

Consecutively, as earlier mentioned, Schlosberg’s Transition Theory will be examined, as this is the main theoretical instrument used to frame and analyse sourced empirical data. Furthermore, Schlossberg’s transition theory has been repeatedly used and often referenced to understand the experiential processes involved in transiting between two defining phases of human existence, regardless of the configuration, creating a framework for interpreting transitions. Lastly, this work described the tenets of the four domains stated in Schlosberg’s transition theory, essential for taking stocks during the transition, which are instrumental to answering the research questions of this thesis. Also, an instrumental theoretical tool for creating a base for understanding this work is Storytelling, as it will be a reoccurring theoretical foundation throughout this thesis.

2.1. The Glass Ceiling Theory and Entrepreneurship

The glass-ceiling conundrum is one of the dominant metaphors, an acknowledged and famous phenomenon, especially in the corporate world. Wall Street Journal initially coined the glass ceiling terminology to mean an inherent, imperceptible, but impenetrable barrier that inhibits women from achieving equality with their male counterparts at the topmost executive levels of the corporate ladder (Maxwell, 2007). Morrison and Von Glinow (1990) define the glass ceiling phenomenon as ‘a barrier so delicate and transparent, yet so potent that it debars women and minorities from ascending the management hierarchy’ within organizations. It is a commonly used terminology for women aspiring for corporate leadership and executive positions (Morrison et al., 1987; Luke, 2016) to analyse and understand women’s scarcity in senior organizational positions. Worthy of note is its existence beyond the four walls of the corporate environment, with its systematic presence in the entrepreneurial and business spheres (Madichie, 2009). This may be adduceable to the entrepreneurship scene, originally male dominated for years (Ting-Ling et al., 2018), and has recently been witnessing increasing
numbers of female entrepreneurs in the field (Goyal & Yadav, 2014). Subsequently, just like men, women continuously register their interest in influencing vast local and global business engagements by reducing poverty, creating jobs, and making pivotal contributions to economic growth (Goyal & Yadav, 2014). In recent times, female-owned enterprises are increasingly disrupting the settings of traditional entrepreneurship foundations, creating businesses that provide financial independence for women, and changing the narratives of economic diversity and inclusion (Yunis et al., 2019).

To simulate this in the entrepreneurship context, Kephart and Schumacher (2005) argued that factors like lack of access to finance, patriarchy, family constraint, sociocultural barriers, access to corporate networks, education and business, and gender stereotyping are some of the prominent manifestations of the glass ceiling in the entrepreneurial world. Similarly, in entrepreneurship, Obodoechi et al., (2022) conceived that the glass ceiling manifests differently than it does in the traditional corporate setting. However, it reflects women's challenges in starting and operating a new business. In the context of this research work, the first glass ceiling refers to career impediment experiences of women in advancing their careers and aiming to occupy executive roles within the corporate setting in an organization, which is suggested to be a catalyst for women’s transition from the corporate paid employment into entrepreneurship.

Consequently, the glass ceiling syndrome could also be a lens for viewing the challenges and impediments encountered by women who exit the corporate world to start their businesses. Previous research on this subject affirms that women who establish their businesses also experience intrinsic gender bias that thwarts their growth and impedes their business performance (Carter & Rosa, 1998; Marlow, 2002; Carter et al., 2007; Lee & Cheon, 2009; Coleman & Robb, 2009; Bellucci et al., 2010). This systemic lopsided gender parity experienced by women entrepreneurs in accessing and accumulating capital resources, limited by social-cultural barriers, patriarchy, family constraints, and gender stereotyping, represents the second glass ceiling (Bellucci et al., 2010). The capital markets and the factors negatively impacting starting and developing entrepreneurial businesses are projected instances of a second glass ceiling (Bosse and Taylor III, 2012). Arguably, the significant progress recorded by women entrepreneurs in this field may tend to relegate the impact of gender bias in this situation. Nevertheless, as recorded by previous research, women still face critical stumbling blocks in starting and running their businesses (Muravyev et al., 2009; Bellucci et al., 2010). Issues such as limited or no access to favourable market, authority exertion, socio-cultural
barriers, family constraints, patriarchy, managerial problems, transformational business ideas, lack of support, capital market knowledge, and loan acquisition and approval are some of the identified challenges women entrepreneurs encounter in starting and running their businesses (Bosse and Taylor III, 2012).

Although the ongoing discussion may indicate that female entrepreneurs still experience glass ceiling effects in their entrepreneurial dealings, some scholars have identified some inherent positive attributes of female entrepreneurship that may advance gender parity, thereby breaking the glass ceiling. Glass ceiling, in this regard, represents a product of gender inequality. For example, in recent studies, Sajjad et al. (2020), exploring existing secondary data from the Female Entrepreneurship Index report, KOF Globalisation Index, and Human Development Report, all from 2015, identified a connection between female entrepreneurship and attaining gender parity. Also, the United Nations’ High-Level Political Forum held in New York in 2022 on advancing SDGs concluded that supporting women's entrepreneurship is crucial to curtailing gender inequalities and promoting women’s economic contribution and participation (UN HLPF, 2022).

Additionally, while investigating female entrepreneurs’ lived experiences on their “freedom journey”, Alkhaled and Berglund (2018) discovered that their entrepreneurial activities helped free them from societal gendered constraints. Such stories may spur an interest in entrepreneurial engagement in other women to empower themselves and gain gender parity. Thus, women use entrepreneurship to empower and emancipate themselves from inequalities (Alkhaled and Berglund, 2018). By implication, empowerment connotes that entrepreneurship gives women individualized freedom within institutionalized systems and structures. At the same time, emancipation is a desire of women to confront and alter existing power structures to gain collective freedom through entrepreneurship (Alkhaled & Berglund, 2018). However, the high rate of female entrepreneurship, especially in developing countries, could be a response to gender inequalities in social and economic scenes (Olanrewaju & Fernando, 2020).

Moreover, fostering female entrepreneurial activities seems more significant, especially in developing countries with high gender inequalities (Petalcorin & Kim, 2022). Female entrepreneurship could be instrumental in advancing women's participation in society. Hence, it may be potent enough to shatter the glass ceiling and promote equality. The following section puts this in better perspective regarding the Nigerian context.
2.2. Glass Ceiling and Female Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

According to Daniyan-Bagudu et al. (2016), female entrepreneurship in Nigeria can respond to the terrible experiences women experience in traditional job contexts and be a tool to combat those experiences. Within this study, these unpleasant experiences can be framed as the glass ceiling that women face in traditional employment settings. Although the glass ceiling is a representation of impediments and limitations to women’s career advancement in the corporate world, entrepreneurship paves an alternative path that gives women the freedom to shape their realities by creating opportunities that are instrumental to changing the general trajectory, thereby challenging existing gender norms (Madichie, 2009). Sadly enough, although female entrepreneurship in Nigeria has been on the increase in recent times, some impediments still exist to achieving their entrepreneurial goals and aspirations, which can then be viewed as the existence of a new form of the glass ceiling in entrepreneurship. Relatedly, Madichie, (2009) recounts that, despite women breaking free from the traditional employment settings in Nigeria, they still encounter growth-impeding limitations that tend to hinder their business success and growth. The following subsections discuss how Nigerian female entrepreneurs encounter glass ceilings.

2.2.1. Gender Bias and Discrimination

Given that Nigerian socio-cultural inclinations are deeply rooted in patriarchy (Kuada, 2009), there is a high chance that gender discrimination will still be a significant challenge, especially in the business world (Woldie & Adersua, 2004). Chances are high that Nigerian female entrepreneurs may encounter gender bias and discrimination in several dimensions and stages of their entrepreneurial journey. Hence, they may be susceptible to stereotypes and skepticism, undermining their expertise and credibility. Gender bias and discrimination are potent enough to obstruct Nigerian female entrepreneurs' access to harness business opportunities, partnerships, contracts, and ultimately hindering their growth and profitability (Mordi et al., 2010). In the Nigerian context, until recently, women were perceived as being deficient in the requisite intellectual capacity and prowess, backward in taking initiatives for witty inventions, not having leadership skills or financial shrewdness, and confidence to profitably manage a business without the assistance or support of the male gender (Ituma & Simpson, 2007). Gender bias and discrimination as a form of glass ceiling Nigerian women encounter in starting and growing their businesses have a twin sister, which is discussed in the next point.
2.2.2. Cultural and Societal Expectations

In addition to gender and discrimination discussed previously, cultural and societal expectations thwart the establishment and growth of female enterprises in Nigeria (Mordi et al., 2010). This additional pressure women face to own and operate a business is orchestrated by traditional gender roles and expectations, with family obligations and household duties as leading factors (Kuada, 2009). The sad reality where this cultural and societal expectation bites harder is when it constitutes an obstacle in balancing these expectations with the demands of entrepreneurship, negatively impacting their ability to dedicate ample time and energy to their businesses (Mordi et al., 2010, p.15). Interestingly, even single women are not excluded from the family obligations web. Therefore, the importance placed on this factor does not exclude single women as they must cater to their siblings and parents, even if they have a running business (Mordi et al., 2010, p.15).

Similarly, Lawan (2017) submits that cultural and societal expectations adversely affect female entrepreneurship, as some communities in Nigeria measure the integrity of female entrepreneurs, using their marital status as a yardstick. This submission runs on a two-way street; if they are single, it means that the business is a colossal distraction shifting their focus from the desire to get married, but if they are married, it means that their business is thriving only at the expense of their family wellbeing (Lawan, 2017, p. 251). In the same vein, the inability of the husband to control his wife or provide for his household sufficiently are socially constructed reasons why a married woman will own a business or paid job outside her marital home (Njeru & Njoka, 2001). Concerning the entrepreneurial glass ceiling of lack of access to funds, some Nigerian communities still forbid women to own landed properties, houses, inherited, or acquired (Lawan, 2017). This means that women do not have access to the collateral needed to secure business loans from banks (Lawan, 2017).

2.2.3. Access to Funding

A major challenge for Nigerian female entrepreneurs is limited access to funding and investment opportunities. Gender stereotypes and biases are significant causes of women's difficulties in securing substantial capital to start or expand their businesses (Lawan, 2017). This lack of financial support can thwart their growth potential, thus, limiting the chances to scale their ventures. A lack of financial capability can truncate anyone’s plan, irrespective of
the nature of their engagements or interests. Lack of access to financial provisions required to start or build a business is a leading representation of the entrepreneurial glass ceiling for Nigerian female entrepreneurs (Daniyan-Bagudu et al., 2016). Nigerian female entrepreneurs are estimated to own 25% to 30% of registered businesses, of which 10% to 15% have access to standard bank credit (Halkias et al., 2011). Such a reality has overbearing negative impacts on women’s ability to develop their enterprises, prompt employment, or stimulate attempts to contribute positively to Nigeria’s economy (Iheduru, 2002).

On rare occasions where women have managed to secure credit, limited services and programs are available, restricting their scope of earnings potential and economic activity (Iheduru, 2002). Putting perspectives to the discussion, Framework for a Strategy to Support Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria reported that the reason why female entrepreneurs seem to have limited access to business funds is that they do not possess the requisite substantial assets requested by commercial banks to make them loan-worthy (Halkias et al., 2011). Nwidobie (2016) submits that Nigerian banks generally have apathy for lending to female entrepreneurs. These banks regularly operate binary systems favouring men (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003). Additionally, entrepreneurship empowerment programs that assist small businesses mainly focus on men-owned businesses (Halkias et al., 2011). Usually, when these initiatives are designed to help women in business, they often need more continuous programming (Iheduru, 2002).

2.2.4 Limited Government Supports and Policies

Although studies confirm that the Nigerian government has made efforts to support female entrepreneurship, a giant vacuum remains to be filled to secure more substantial governmental support and policies (Emmanuel, 2013). Legislated supportive regulatory frameworks, less cumbersome access to affordable credit, and adequate infrastructure can substantially contribute to leveling the playing field for female entrepreneurs (Moses et al., 2015). Interestingly, some government policies promoting economic growth explicitly exclude women in most programs (Moses et al., 2015). However, Dionco-Adetayo et al., (2000) confirmed this assertion when they investigated to assess the implementation of several Nigerian government programs. The study focused on determining the success rates of the governmental programs with the primary objective of empowering women in business, uncovering the implementation gap to know how far this has affected the effectiveness of the policy implementation (Dionco-
Adetayo et al., 2000). One way the Nigerian government could provide business support to female entrepreneurs is through adequate infrastructure and constant electrical supply, as this will drastically increase their profit margin, reducing the cost of providing electrical energy to run their businesses (Moses et al., 2015).

### 2.2.5. Limited Networking and Mentorship Opportunities

As the famous saying goes in local Nigerian parlance, “If you want to walk a path successfully, walk with someone who has walked the same path before”. Translating this saying literally in the context of this study, it connotes that when female entrepreneurs do entrepreneurship with the shared knowledge of their senior colleagues in the field, it makes their journey smoother and more straightforward, granting them easy access. Bowei (2020) posits that entrepreneurial education and support harnessed through partnership and mentorship of experienced entrepreneurs by new entrepreneurs has a high potential to yield business success. However, Nigerian female entrepreneurs' difficulties in gaining access to connections, knowledge sharing, and business guidance through mentorship and networking seem to negatively impact their business growth (Woldie & Adersua, 2004). Expectedly, these challenges may hinder their ability to acquire industry knowledge, access valuable resources, and develop strategic partnerships (Moses et al., 2015).

### 2.3. Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

The engagement of this theory is crucial to understand the possible existence of the glass ceiling in the entrepreneurial experiences of female entrepreneurs in their transition process from paid employment. This research uses the theoretical framework and inspiration of Schlossberg’s transition theory postulated by Dr Nancy K. Schlossberg to take stock of the process, giving perspectives to the crux of this work. The creation of this transition theory was a response to a need for the development of a suitable framework that would promote a coherent comprehension of transitioning adults, helping them to identify and connect to the relevant help required for them to cope with the vicissitudes inherent in the process of living (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, Renn, 2010, p. 213).

Schlossberg (2008), while remodifying her work, opined that going through a transition process can be incapacitating, describing transitions as life fluctuations that leave us perplexed.
(Schlossberg, 2008). Hence, regardless of the nature of the transition we may be experiencing, either positive or negative, the transition still sustains the potential to disorganize our lives, changing the narratives of how we live our lives (Barclay, 2017). Schlossberg also highlighted the importance of perception and its influence on our transition (Schlossberg, 2008). For instance, the same way a student transitioning into college might find the experience anticipatory and exhilarating, on the flip side, another student may find it frightening and horrendous (Barclay, 2017).

Consequently, in addition to the transition process being a disruption across multiple facets of an individual experiencing transition, it motivates an individual to systematically develop new potentials and expectations for themselves and their future (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002). Moreover, Schlossberg (2008) further posits that an individual undergoing a transition process experiences significant life alterations that necessitate an enormous amount of acclimatization “even when the benefits far outweigh the deficits” (p. 89). Relatedly, Andersson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012), state that the goal is for the individual in the transition process to experience a positive “emergent growth process” (p. 49), during the transition.

However, the transition process is an ongoing occurrence, which takes place over a particular time frame, and not a “one point in time” occurrence Anderson et al., (2012), with every transition beginning with an ending (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002). This means that the transition process can be likened to a double-edged sword, with one edge representing an end to a phase or preoccupation of an individual’s life and the other indicating the emergence or beginning of a new phase of the transitioner’s life endeavours. Thus, it may be apposite to reason that the roles played by social, political, economic, educational, as well as field professionals (as the case may be) are significantly helpful in providing adequately needed assistance for the transitioning individual to take charge, leveraging on the inherent advantages presented by the challenges embedded in the transition. To attain this, however, a transitioning individual must evaluate these challenges to explore available options, thereby increasing their coping strategies (Barclay, 2017). Hence, the transition theory provides a framework for practitioners to assist any transitioning individual, regardless of the field, through their transitions (Schlossberg, 2008).
2.3.1. Transition Theory Components

In the event of a transition, a precipitated procedure occurs as an adult begins to implement the new adjustments, evident in the two main areas of the transition theory. The first area concerns understanding where an individual is in their transitions. Schlossberg (2008) explained that each transition stage allows for examining and steering the transition. The first area is the moving in, moving through, and moving out phases concerning a person’s transition process. A transition often begins with a "moving in" or "moving out" phase. This is the adjustment stage, where an individual learns new routines, roles, and responsibilities. Followed closely by this stage is the "moving through" stage, where an individual begins to encounter several challenges and difficulties they try to manage in their new environment. Then the last stage is the "moving out" stage, which depicts the process of finalizing a solid transition to the next phase of life (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002). It permits an individual to end a transition cycle and start another one while implementing an ongoing transformative event in everyday practice (Andersson, Goodman, and Schlossberg, 2012).

The second area of Schlossberg’s transition theory comprises four main transition elements that explain the acceptance levels a person can handle in a life-changing event. Schlossberg refers to these elements as required parameters for taking stocks during the transition. The elements often referred to as the 4 S System are situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 1995). The investigation of the circumstances surrounding the transition process and the importance of the effect on the person is called situation. Self is the area that includes an individual’s identity, investigating their optimism level when dealing with ambiguity, highlighting their perspective concerning the situation and psychological resources to help manage the transition. Support incorporates where the support may come from, support resources, what type of support is presented, and the assets and people that encourage and strengthen an individual, assisting them in dealing with the transition. The last area is strategies – ways, and functions of coping with a transition – that incorporate coping mechanisms to help the person react to his or her transition event (Schlossberg, 1995).

2.3.1.1. Situation

To apply Schlossberg’s transition theory, she suggests that assessing the situation should be the first call to action (Schlossberg, 1995). Most importantly, identifying the nature of the transition is instrumental to its successful navigation. It is deciphering if a transition process is an
anticipated, unanticipated, or even a nonevent (a desired event that does not come to fruition) (Schlossberg, 1995). However, Nonevents are very distinctive because their impact on the transitioner is directly proportional to the amount of hope the transitioner has attached to the event (Schlossberg, Lissitz, Altman, and Steinberg, 1992).

Other parameters for evaluating the situation include transition trigger(s) and timing, whether the transitioner is experiencing stress simultaneously, previous experience with similar transition, and anticipated duration of the transition (Schlossberg, 2008), cited in Barclay (2017). In addition, Schlossberg (2008) proposed the following guiding questions to comprehend the situation better when taking stocks during the transition.

a.) Judging from the transitioner’s point of view, is the situation good or bad?
b.) Is the situation expected or unexpected by the transitioner?
c.) What is the timing of the situation – Did it come at the right or wrong time?
d.) What phase is the transitioner in the transition process – at the beginning, middle, or end?

2.3.1.2. Support

For humans to attain optimal everyday functionality, especially during transitions, the essentiality of support they get from necessary sources must be emphasized. So, because humans, men and women alike, experience stress differently, the support they experience too may vary (Schlossberg, 2008). Nevertheless, a resilient and beneficial support system has proven to be of great mental and physical help to individuals (Barclay, 2017). However, in this context, an individual’s age is crucial in determining where he/she gets support. For instance, an individual's age determines their circle of friends, association, and influence. An aging individual or emerging adult tends to rely strongly on the members of their family, society, or their peers (Barclay, 2017). Thus, as people age, they tend to engage in social activities such as extracurricular activities, family gatherings, peer group networks, sports activities, and cultural organizations, which constitute support systems and channels accessible to individuals engaged in these activities (Schlossberg, 2008). Therefore, the following questions proposed by Schlossberg will assist an individual in taking stock of support while assessing their transitioning process (Schlossberg, 2008),
2.3.1.3. **Self**

Human beings attach great significance and purpose to their life experiences (Anderson et al., 2012). Thus, transitioners must be cognizant of their attitudes, perceptions, and self-perceived abilities (Barclay, 2017). In assessing the self-domain, Anderson et al., (2012) suggest two lenses: the personal and demographic characteristics and the psychological resources. The former concerns how an individual perceives and evaluates life (Anderson et al., 2012), most notably during transitions (p.97). These include an individual’s race, gender, ethnicity, culture, age, socioeconomic status, stage in life, and state of health. The psychological resource of the self-domain centers on the innate coping strategies and mechanisms a person engages in during perceived threats that they bring to their transitioning experiences (Barclay, 2017).

Subsequently, everyone possesses intuitive and intangible resources (Schlossberg, 2008). Resources such as these include but are not limited to; one’s perspectives about life (positive or negative), state of maturity, and a sense of obligation or resistance to the transition (Barclay, 2017). Schlossberg (2008), suggests the consideration of the following questions in taking stock of self during transitions;

a.) Does the transition events or nonevents make the transitioner feel overwhelmed?

b.) What is the transitioner’s life outlook – optimistic or pessimistic?

c.) During transitions, does the transitioner feel a sense of mastery or control?

d.) Does the transitioner approach transition with an apathetic, denial, or fighting spirit?

2.3.1.4. **Struggles**

The strategy transitioning stock-taking tool describes how an individual engages in transitioning. It specifically concerns the way one navigates transitions while concurrently paying apt attention to one's mental wellbeing (Schlossberg, 2008). Moreover, this comes in twofold: identifying one’s coping resources and deciding which of the four approaches to use as an agency for transitioning (Barclay, 2017). Furthermore, a variety of options are included in the process; readjusting the situation and altering the meaning of the situation (before stress
evolution); regulating and managing the situation (after stress evolution); or taking calculated or intentional inaction (Schlossberg, 2008). At this juncture, (Schlossberg, 2008, p.103) presents the following questions with regards to the strategy taking stocks tool;

a.) Does the transitioner engage a plethora range of strategies?
b.) Is the transitioner attempting to change the transition?
c.) Is the transitioner taking actions to alter the meaning of transition?
d.) How well does the transitioner copes with stress during the transition?
e.) How well does the transitioner apply adjustability depending on the current challenge?

The next chapter will discuss the research design of this research study. It includes the approaches the researcher deems fit to answer the research questions. First, the chapter discusses the data collection and analysis procedures, juxtaposing why it was chosen versus other data collection techniques. Next, the data analysis process will discuss the themes that have naturally emerged from the empirical data collected. Finally, the credibility and reliability of the study are examined to incorporate the ethical methods used for participants’ protection.
3. Methodology and Methods

The essence of this chapter is to present a comprehensive walk-through analysis of the underlying methodological and methodical principles and patterns that constitutes the empirical pillar upon which this research work stands. The chapter focuses on the chart of this thesis from the initial stage to the development of methods and methodological concepts all through to the finalization.

3.1. Qualitative Research

The core theoretical framework used in this research work supports the tenets and research style of the qualitative paradigm. Hence, qualitative, and not quantitative research method have been deemed most suitable for this study. However, there has been a weak age-long argument on the appropriateness and tangibility, or the advantages and disadvantages of the quantitative research model over the qualitative, and vice versa (Deetz, 1996). Nevertheless, a distinctive feature of the qualitative method is that, while the quantitative method is concerned with typically starting from the researcher’s preconceived ideas about the scopes and classifications that should create the study’s focal point, the qualitative method takes a departure from the actions and perspectives of the studied subjects (Bryman, 1989). This means that qualitative research equips the researcher with vital information through the respondents’ narration of their stories, detailing their perceptions and actions, which are needed to understand the respondents’ feelings, meaning and relevance attached to their experiences.

Bryman (2012) argues for the appropriateness of qualitative research because it accentuates the importance of words over the simple quantification of data collection and analysis. Simply put, qualitative research represents data in words form rather than in numbers (Busetto et al., 2020). Since the crux of this research is evaluating the lived experiences of women who transitioned from paid employment into being entrepreneurs, with emphasis on their coping strategies and challenges during the transitioning process, collecting data through words and not numbers are most appropriate. More importantly, the research question requires the interpretation of the stories told and the perceptions and emotions behind them, providing the researcher with an indepth understanding of the research area, hence the viability of the qualitative research method. Again, qualitative designs are instrumental for observing some unseen patterns and motifs in empirical resources (Busetto et al., 2020). However, a plausible constraint of this
research method is its inherent limitations regarding the generalization of the study because a theory is created from facts (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

To connect this to the next section of an appropriate philosophical, theoretical base (social constructivism) qualitative research method has been specifically identified to be relevant to the study of social relations (Flick, 2018). It provides the most suitable explanation for using the philosophical, theoretical view of social constructivism to better understand the underpinnings of this research work. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018), posit that qualitative research is a viable methodical tool to conduct research using the social constructivism methodology.

3.2. Social Constructivism

The tenets of this thesis allowed the author to examine the research problem through the lens of social constructivism. Social constructivism supports the argument that reality is socially constructed through interactions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). As such, the reality and knowledge of human development are socially constructed through interactions (McKinley, 2015, p.185). The reality of the transitioning (human development) of the studied female entrepreneurs from paid employment is socially constructed through interactions revolving around their lived experiences.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) posit that reality, according to social constructivists, is not naturally given. Instead, knowledge and reality are derivatives of forces engrained in sociocultural norms, expectations, beliefs, and values. Hence, a socially constructed reality is hinged on the continual support and affirmation it gets from existing values, sociocultural norms, and beliefs (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Since entrepreneurship as a human endeavour is a social phenomenon, recognizing significant sociocultural values is of symbolic relevance to understanding the construction of entrepreneurs’ reality in the society (Moriano, 2012). Social actions (by entrepreneurs) are substantial human activities (Weber, cited in Runciman, 1978) that cannot be alienated from their cultural and social context (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Douglas, 2004; Gamage, 2004). Related to this research area, this means that the actions that characterized the transitioning experience of these female entrepreneurs cannot be separated from the socio-cultural values, beliefs, and ethical framework in their society.
Thus, the entrepreneurial world is a pathway through a well-incorporated culture and society in which the belief system becomes a critical determinant of an individual’s actions (Hofstede et al., 2004), economic actions inclusive. Correspondingly, if the entrepreneurial experience of the transitioning women can be said to have been ingrained in or significantly influenced by socially constructed integrated belief systems that determine their actions, then an inquiry into their lived experiences could be another attempt to examine their efforts towards constructing their reality through interactions. However, their perceptions of their transitioning realities and the coping mechanisms they engaged in during those periods, which justifies their decision to transit, will ultimately create a leeway for the research questions to be answered. To actualize this, presenting their narration through their stories will aid the process of comprehending, interpreting, and analyzing their realities. Hence, storytelling becomes an inevitable tool to accomplish this purpose.

3.3. **Storytelling**

Storytelling is narrating and re-narrating stories and experiences in a way that anchors reality on the stories told (Jørgensen, 2020). Stories are practical organizational representation tools through written language or verbal expressions (Bies et al., 1993). Stories are narratives infused with symbolic emotions that strengthen and permeate facts and information about occurrences, giving them definite meanings and not merely stating them (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2005). Therefore, since these narratives transform existing norms or create new opportunities, storytelling becomes an integral initiative in political action (Jørgensen, 2020). Related to transforming existing norms and creating opportunities, a complete communication process is an essential tool to fortify the storytelling concept. Hence, storytelling establishes a line of communication between at least two participants; a speaker (the narrator) and a listener (the audience). Storytelling is a social occurrence where participants constitute a social character, and at least a social character is established for the storyteller and the story listener (Georges, 1969).

To accentuate and further corroborate the concept of storytelling, Hannah Arendt shares her idea, captured in Jørgensen (2020), that making our voice heard and our presence seen is the lifeline of storytelling, hence, necessitating the essentiality of an audience(s) in any given storytelling event. Relating this to the subject of study, storytelling is an essential component of an entrepreneur’s toolkit to tackle the difficulties new ventures encounter in attracting
resources needed to grow their business and survive because they seemingly lack legitimacy in the sight of the stakeholders (Garud et al., 2014). Hence, it is apposite to state at this juncture that entrepreneurs’ power lies in their stories and how they use the power derived from telling their stories to navigate the corridors of power relations with diverse stakeholders whose political and economic dispositions are crucial to the survival of their enterprises.

3.4. Entrepreneurial Storytelling

Whatever the aspiration of an entrepreneur is; - to “change their immediate world”, “just to explore an idea”, or the most evident desire, “to take charge of their career”, - an entrepreneur cannot afford to overlook or wish away a timely need to inspire, captivate and persuade their audience. Moreover, an effective way to actualize this is through telling captivating stories.

However, according to Lugmayr et al., (2017), entrepreneurial storytelling can be interpreted as “serious storytelling”. In this context, storytelling goes beyond “telling stories for entertainment” purposes. Instead, it is a serious context, as entrepreneurs, especially female entrepreneurs, engaging storytelling as a crucial tool to societally emplace themselves, in contrast to the “socially constructed” perceptions of entrepreneurship acceptance yardstick. It concerns a calculated process and advancements as an array of monumental qualitative patterns. Through this concept of entrepreneurial storytelling, individual entrepreneurial activities, and experiences are rationalized and can be comprehensively understood, thereby creating new knowledge (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). The storytelling tool allows the entrepreneur to carefully distil a complicated mishmash of equivocal and contradictory activities into a streamlined and relatively coherent representation (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001).

As evident in this research work, the stories told by these women can represent them, giving perspectives to their struggles and challenges, and possibly proffer solutions through socio-cultural change and perhaps create a pro-female entrepreneurship awareness in society. Hence, entrepreneurial storytelling can change the trajectory of their entrepreneurial journeys.

Consequently, stories are essential in the mechanisms that facilitate new businesses' emergence. When these female entrepreneurs engage in entrepreneurial storytelling, they can captivate the minds of their audience or prospective customers and investors to their advantage. Subsequently, the purpose of entrepreneurial storytelling is to ensure that an enterprise is explicit and consequential in the face of low legitimacy, owing to a lack of business history,
robust capital, lack of performance records (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994) and maybe social stratification, as suggestively evident in this research work. It is apposite to conceive that Nigerian society's patriarchal structure automatically subjects female entrepreneurs to the risk of low business legitimacy. However, storytelling can give them an edge to conquer such challenges. Furthermore, entrepreneurs develop and tell stories of their identities, in most cases, their transitions from paid employment to entrepreneurship, and how their business will inadvertently make them autonomous and benefit the stakeholders and society. Again, the crafting of the identity of a new business is facilitated by storytelling, to gain legitimacy by consumers, investors, and competitors; hence, entrepreneurial stories must be carefully constructed (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001).

3.5. Data Collection

Data collation for this research work was done through primary and secondary sources.

3.5.1. Primary Sources

Primary data collection means the author used research materials collated by the researcher conducting the research through first-hand information gathering (Saunders et al., 2012). The most relatable means regarding this research method (qualitative) is data collection through interviews. Qualitative interviews may have been said to be relatively loosely structured in nature, but they allow for an exhaustive account of the respondents’ ideas, knowledge, body gestures and dispositions, and experiences being documented (Alvesson, 2003; Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth, & Keil, 1988; Fontana & Frey, 1994) which are crucial for building a proper case for the research and answering the research questions. Silverman (2010) posits that the researcher benefits the most from the stories told, providing opportunities for in-depth inquiries from the interview questions. Thus, in this case, this author conceived that a semi structured interview is most applicable for this project because it allows for an unhindered flow of vital information in a half-controlled interview session.

3.5.2. Secondary Sources

The usage of secondary sources in research work refers to extracting useful information from research material previously collected by other researchers. The rareness of previous research done regarding the specifics, most notably the exploration of the transition theory to answer
the research questions in this research work, has limited the access this researcher has to ride on established facts and literature solely dedicated to the crux of this thesis. However, this author found some interesting previous works done in closely relevant areas, which were valuable supplements and contributed to the vitality of this work.

3.5.3. Interviews

During the interview process, the researcher and research interview respondents engage in a mutual dialogue (Moen, 2016) to gain knowledge of the respondents’ lived experiences. Thus, interviews are instrumental in understanding interviewees' opinions and subjective experiences (Busetto et al., 2020). Furthermore, Silverman (2015) posits that the researcher gains access to rich empirical data from the stories told to get more in-depth from the interview questions. Thus, a semi-structured interview is deemed most appropriate for this project as it allows for an unrestricted flow of vital information in a half-controlled interview session. In addition, a semi-structured interview allows the interviewee to elaborate on what they feel is most important instead of being guided by the researcher’s previous knowledge (Janet Salmons, 2015). Conversely, the structured interview style is deductive and highly controlled (Alvesson, 2011), strictly regularized not to allow the researcher to read between the lines, decoding and interpreting what the respondent did not verbally say.

However, in conducting a semi-structured interview, the researcher uses a pre-formulated interview guide consisting of the specific topics or questions to be covered (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). An interview guide is required to regulate the interview questions, tailoring them along the right and desired directions, stay on track with the research topic, and occasionally probe the interviewee further to expatiate their responses. Expectedly, in line with the qualitative research approach, this study engaged theory-based themes, translated to “everyday language”, to construct the interview questions. Before the commencement of each interview session, the topical research areas, structure, and relevant terms were explained to the interviewee. They were at liberty to respond to the questions and sentence construction in their most convenient way. For this thesis, seven respondents were interviewed.

3.5.4. Interview Selection Process

Female entrepreneurs with at least five years of corporate experience who were previously employed in a typical corporate environment make up the target demographic for this study.
project, from which participants were chosen. However, it was not a criterion whether the line of entrepreneurial business they ventured into was related to their previous job, although only some of them went into the same profession as independent entrepreneurs after exiting their previous jobs. Other criteria were the years of entrepreneurial experience which was pegged at two years on the minimum. Furthermore, to cover a broad spectrum, this researcher opted for age brackets to represent between 30 and 50 years old for the respondents. Finally, all the interview respondents were married and in a functional marriage with children.

3.6. Data Analysis Method

**Inductive Approach and Natural Emergence of Themes**

An exclusive characteristic of engaging the qualitative approach in research is the flexibility of using inductive and deductive methods or combining both methods (Cho & Lee, 2014). The inductive qualitative approach to research involves building a theory, starting by observing specific instances and seeking to establish generalizations about the phenomenon under study (Hyde, 2000). In the context of this work, the inductive approach will be used, as it aligns most with the research structure. The collected empirical data about Nigerian female entrepreneurs’ transitioning experiences does not test(deductive) but creates a theory. Intrinsically, themes, codes, or categories are precisely drawn from the data in the inductive approach (Cavanagh, 1997). Thus, for analyzing the acquired empirical data, thematic analysis was used. According to the inductive qualitative approach, natural themes emerged that were decoded and extracted from the collected data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis identifies and analyzes patterns of meanings as they emerge from a given data. It extracts the central themes of the phenomenon with reference to the research area that is being studied (Daly et al., 1997).

3.7. Research Reliability and Credibility

Research reliability and credibility seek to answer the question of; “Are the research results repeatable” (Bryman, 2012, p. 48). Accordingly, qualitative studies should be investigated using criteria that are fit and developed for the qualitative paradigm (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). Thus, qualitative researchers should try to achieve valid and reliable results (Cavanagh, 1997) while using relevant qualitative paradigm criteria. To determine the credibility and stability of qualitative research findings, Cavanagh (1997) proposed that the exactness of the qualitative research findings should be validated by applying statutory terminologies and
earlier constructed criteria to test the results collected from qualitative studies. In effect, the result of a research must pass the test of transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility (Bryman, 2012).

Consequently, to ensure that these criteria for research credibility and reliability are fulfilled in this research work, the researcher used these yardsticks to develop this thesis. This thesis research sought to achieve this right from the choice of interview respondents up to the interview transcribing and finalizing stages. Because the interviewees were all far away in Nigeria, Africa, all the interviews were conducted via Zoom. They were recorded, with each interview session lasting at least 55mins and at most 1 hour 30mins, indicating the importance of prolonged conversation and engagement to ascertain credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The recorded Zoom interview sessions were dutifully and painstakingly transcribed to rule out the possibility of hurried assumptions. Each transcribing session took at least 4 hours or more. Likewise, to ensure credibility, this researcher participated in several peer interrogations and member examinations and engaged in discussions (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) during supervision sessions with my thesis supervisor, where I got valuable feedback to strengthen further and enrich the research materials to vitalize this research work.

To eliminate chances for biases, the researcher engaged in self-reflexivity at intervals and a verification method to checkmate and rule out the possibility of sentimental judgments. This method allows the researcher to continue, modify, or terminate the research process to achieve credibility and reliability (Morse et al., 2002). This method entails proper auditing, cross-examining the research materials against the raw data (recordings), and being precise. This was achieved by sending a copy of the transcribed research material to each interviewee to confirm the correctness and proper representation of our conversation, ensuring their lived experiences were transcribed in their own words and captured what they meant when answering the questions (Bryman, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, after each interview session, additional questions were asked to reconfirm and clarify possible discrepancies, ensuring data quality and uniformity throughout the sessions.

3.8. Overview of Interview

The table below represents relevant information of the participants on the nature of their businesses and location, with an indication of their corporate job roles. All participants were
females. The virtual interview was conducted for all participants that lasted between 55mins to 1hr 30mins.

Table 1: Summary of Participants’ Demography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Corporate Job</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
<th>Location of Business</th>
<th>Years in Corporate Job</th>
<th>Years as Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Web Developer</td>
<td>Tech Product Designer</td>
<td>Ikoyi, Lagos</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
<td>5yrs</td>
<td>39yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Retail Supervisor</td>
<td>Restaurant Owner</td>
<td>Ojota, Lagos</td>
<td>7yrs</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
<td>43yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Purchase Order Specialist</td>
<td>Nutrition Drink Manufacturer</td>
<td>Ikeja, Lagos</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
<td>4yrs</td>
<td>35yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>HR Personnel</td>
<td>HR Consultant</td>
<td>Yaba, Lagos</td>
<td>4yrs</td>
<td>7yrs</td>
<td>40yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Brand Marketer</td>
<td>Corporate Brand Strategist</td>
<td>Victoria Island, Lagos</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
<td>4yrs</td>
<td>45yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Business Administrator</td>
<td>Financial Business Analyst</td>
<td>Lekki, Lagos</td>
<td>8yrs</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
<td>42yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Production Supervisor</td>
<td>Food Processing Company</td>
<td>Ikorodu, Lagos</td>
<td>5yrs</td>
<td>5yrs</td>
<td>36yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.9. The Role of the Researcher
The researcher’s role in this thesis was to interpret the empirical data from interview materials and establish recurrent themes in respondents’ responses to the interview questions, using Schlossberg’s theoretical framework as a lens for analyses. After an informal discussion, the researcher sent out interview invites to respondents to establish a mutually agreed time for the Zoom interview and ensure to interview as when due. The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews to understand the transition process of these female entrepreneurs.
3.10. Ethical Consideration
Machi & McEvoy (2009) posit that personal attachment to an interest provides the passion and dedication necessary for conducting sound research, which is a plus (p. 19). As a woman who once left the four walls of the corporate environment to become a small business owner before pursuing this master’s degree in Sweden, I desire to conduct promising research to highlight the possible challenges Nigerian women encounter in their pursuit of economic, political, and societal stability in the light of their chosen career path. This may, in turn, impact businesses, leaders, and organizational cultures. I ensured to gain the trust and consent of my interviewees by disclosing that I was once in their shoes and that they could choose to answer a question or not, assuring them that the procedure was fair and just. I also explained the purpose for which the interview conversations will be used and informed them of their right to continue the process or terminate it at their will. While signing the consent form, I advised them to ensure their contentment with the provisions before appending their signatures. They were informed that their identities would not be disclosed under any circumstances, and the Zoom session recordings were deleted immediately after transcribing. Biased questions were not asked in the interview process, and I made them feel respected, appreciated, and comfortable. Appreciation emails were sent at the end of the process for being generous with their time to make them feel valued.
4. Empirical Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents and analyses the empirical data collected from the interview. The crux of this research is to understand the lived experiences of female entrepreneurs doing business in Lagos, Nigeria, to identify their transition processes from being an employee to becoming entrepreneurs. It also seeks to interpret their stories to highlight possible challenges they encounter in their entrepreneurial adventure.

Since this study was conducted in Lagos state, Nigeria, a brief description of the state is presented below for proper representation. Lagos state is Africa's most populous commercial destination and the most industrious, with an exponential growth rate in Nigeria. The virtue of states (Creation and Transitional Provisions) Decree No. 14 of 1967, created Lagos State on May 27, 1967, restructuring Nigeria’s Federation into 12 states. Lagos municipality was formerly operated as a Federal province by the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Lagos State Affairs, representing the territorial authority. At the same time, the Lagos City Council governed the City of Lagos (info@lagosstate.gov.ng). It is in the Southwestern part of Nigeria, covering an area of 358,862 hectares, representing 0.4% of the country’s territorial landmass of 923,773 sq/km. However, Lagos ceased to be Nigeria’s political capital following the formal relocation of the seat of the Federal Government to Abuja on December 12, 1991. Still, Lagos remains the nation’s commercial and economic capital, making it a thriving hub of entrepreneurs (info@lagosstate.gov.ng). Arguably, Lagos state is a futile land for entrepreneurship where female entrepreneurs would be expected to have more opportunities, but more significant challenges may accompany them.

The interview provided the author of this work with relevant information needed to answer the research questions of this thesis, which were decoded and categorized with the relevant themes that emerged during the transcription process. However, while conducting the interview, all participants reported that a variation of the glass ceiling effect was an impetus that birthed their interest in becoming an entrepreneur. Therefore, to conceal the interviewees' identities and fulfil the confidentiality criteria, I will refer to them as Participants 1-7 in this chapter.

4.1. Undervalued

During the interview sessions with the seven female entrepreneurs who participated in this work, the theme “I often feel unappreciated and not valued in my previous job” was recurrent.
Participants agreed that this was a major catalyst, an impetus for a desire to create a functional economic environment for themselves, where they would feel valued and significant, becoming entrepreneurs. They confirmed how their job made them feel like an inconsequential and unrecognized member of the organization.

The “undervalued” theme seeks to lay the foundation of the empirical data and findings to understand the workplace experiences of these female entrepreneurs before becoming entrepreneurs, targeted towards identifying and establishing possible traces of the glass ceiling effect in their previous work environment and entrepreneurial experiences. This is crucial to understanding the initial stages of their transition into entrepreneurs. Gaining an insight into how their entrepreneurship journey began, these women’s experiences of being undervalued were manifested in diverse ways, some of which are connected to another. These women’s experiences before becoming entrepreneurs are self-explanatory. According to Participant 1, a tech startup entrepreneur, she was more concerned with promotion opportunities eluding her even when she was qualified for them. Although the sector in which she was could be classified as “male-dominated” – tech-, it could suffice as an explanation to make matters more complicated for her. However, it remains a problem of being undervalued.

“Sometimes, the most painful part is seeing a male colleague; you know you are more competent and experienced than being promoted and given higher tasks. It got to a point I summoned the courage to ask my boss, “What am I missing in my job functions, and how can I improve on it? You see, I believe this whole thing is a vicious cycle!”

Perhaps this participant needed to be “twice as good” as her male colleagues at work, representing an iota of career growth impediment for her. The underlying factor responsible for Participant 1’s experience is not farfetched, as it is a clear case of devaluing an individual’s leadership potential and on-the-job skills based on gender preference. Kumra and Manfredi (2012), evaluating women’s access to managerial roles or career advancements within organizations, confirmed a preference for males over the female gender, which frequently does not take cognizance of their experience or academic qualification. Buttressing this, Odoh and Branney (2022), while reviewing organizational leadership literature, established a strong link between masculinity and successful leaders within organizations. This postulation explains why Participant 6 always had to validate her skills and capabilities in her previous workplace. She worked as a financial analyst and had this to say:
“While in my previous job, my ideas and input were not noticed or appreciated; I must always prove myself repeatedly. Even when I performed excellently at my duties, it went unnoticed, with no recognition! Instead, my boss takes the credit. My capabilities and capacities were often undermined; I always had to go by the books and not engage my creativity or novel ideas on the job. Everyone is happy when I close high-value financial deals, and it ends there! No recognition or upward pay review to reward my efforts”.

Studies reveal that women are held to a higher degree of competence than their male counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Yet, according to her, when she works and closes business deals for her company, her boss takes the credit, a vivid picture of women’s distinctive accomplishments being ignored or not given the requisite recognition (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Vial et al., 2016). For her, the fact that her innovation and creativity ability was thwarted, with limited opportunities to grow by making mistakes when trying out new ideas, she began to make her exit plan – entrepreneurship.

Reasonably, Participant 6’s experience could “supposedly” be addressed by the human resources department of an organization. But voicing out to advocate for a change in this vicious circle of female underrepresentation in her previous workplace earned Participant 4 a “blacklist” badge. She recounts her ordeal,

“I always feel left out, not only me but also other female colleagues. The men in the company occupied all top management seats. Almost all the departments were managed by them; they grouped themselves and did not allow women, even qualified women, to grow. Two women who were heads of departments had a tough time earning the respect of their male subordinates; they could not effectively assert authority over them. I was blacklisted because, as the human resources officer, I was always talking about it during our quarterly meetings, advocating for recognition and proportional representation of the women in the organisation”.

As the HR personnel in her office, she was supposed to do her job by ensuring gender-balanced cadre distribution within the organisation, but she was always met with a brick wall. According to Dawn Onley (2016), Human Resources have the exceptional opportunity to drive gender equality within organizations. This goes beyond even distribution of both genders; it involves
giving adequate recognition to gender-specific needs and putting plans in place accordingly to show the organization’s commitment to valuing both genders equally (Hobson et al., 2011). An example of this would be enacting policies that support emotional stability through work life balance, especially for working mothers. Giving real-life perspectives to this, Participant 3 narrates a corroborating experience,

“When I became a new mother, I had just eight weeks of paid maternity leave, I could not resume immediately, so I got four more unpaid weeks. I almost cried on the first day I resumed after maternity, felt emotionally down dropping my baby off with a carer. My emotional stability was messed up. I always feel cheated, especially when I overhear my male colleagues planning an after-work hangout when all I had running in my head was how to rush home and complete my homely duties before rushing to bed. So, I was practically losing it when I attended a skills acquisition seminar organized in my church, learned how to prepare nutrition drinks, and started it on my own while I was still working”.

From this narration, she was more concerned with the value that the company placed on her work-life balance and emotional wellness. She felt the company undervalued her overall wellbeing. Unfortunately, in a traditional patriarchal society like Nigeria, prioritizing work-life balance is exceptionally challenging for female workers because HR policies are institutionally and culturally constituted to dominate and exploit female workers (Nwagbara, 2020). In Nigeria, formulated policies on organizational work-life balance are gendered to favour men (Otobo, 2016). Subsequently, this accounts for the leading cause of the exit of women from the corporate world due to the stress it creates for working family women (Nwagbara, 2020).

Thus, for Participant 3, the pressure to become free and take charge of her time for herself and her family directed her toward entrepreneurship. Compared to her male colleagues who had leisure time after work, she felt cheated when she resumed work as a new mother. Looking for a possible bail-out system from her predicaments, she got herself trained with the relevant skillset and embarked on her entrepreneurial journey. Participant 7 experienced a variation of work-life balance deficiency where she had little or no time for herself and had loosely defined job descriptions. She reports,
“I was always given instruction in my previous job, even on duties that were purely outside the scope of my job descriptions, and I could not reject these orders, ... it was a one-person business; my pay-check was tied to me being obedient, taking up tasks that were and were not mine. The workload became too much; I had no time for myself. I got depressed and always unhappy every Monday morning. It was a manufacturing company where I managed the production line, staff, and even sales of the products”.

Agreeably, she reached a point in her professional career when she needed to prioritize her happiness by working for herself, not being bossed around, and being overworked. This made her decide she had reached her breaking point and could no longer continue with her previous job. In her words, “I was becoming depressed and often unhappy at work... the multiple functions I was covering without corresponding salary was sapping my energy; ... I deserve to be happy.” She believed having her own business and being her own paymaster would make her happy.

4.2. Gender Stereotyping, Social and Family Support

During our conversation in the interview, all the participants shared stories on the impact their gender and socio-cultural beliefs had on their transitioning experiences from employees to entrepreneurs, highlighting the role played by social and family expectations and support. These were recurring themes throughout the interview sessions, although characterized by different experiences.

4.2.1. Social and Family Support

For Participant 2, the inspiration and support she got from her father was a vital coping technique in her transition from employee to entrepreneur. She recounts her experience,

“My father had a different conviction and special support for his female children because he was a business owner while we were young, and we (myself and two other sisters) always took turns to work at his factory anytime we were on break from school. I got his support morally and financially to become an entrepreneur when I discussed how hard it was for me to remain employed and cater to my family”.

35
Agreeably, being an entrepreneur comes with a level of freedom and financial independence, and it could be somewhat surprising and rare for a father to support her daughters’ “freedom” since she was married and expected to be subjected to her husband’s control (Moses et al., p.8, 2015). In this case, being an “independent entrepreneur” might unsettle this “supposed” socially constructed balance of women being dependent on and subject to the directives of the men in their lives (Lawan, 2017). This is so because, as Moses et al. (2015) posited, Nigerian society still qualifies to be described as a patriarchal one where the woman is perceived to always be under a man’s authority and control both economically and socially (Moses et al., 2015). Participant 3 had a similar experience; her husband was the supportive type. She described her experience as,

“I believe I have a rare opportunity and luck that my husband was very supportive when I told him I needed to venture into entrepreneurship. He was fine with catering for the children while I was away, especially during the weekends and late nights. He gave me a lump sum to kickstart my business”.

Again, Participant 3’s experience further gives credit to the fact that times are changing; what used to be the norm of seeing women as men’s personal property now seems to be fading away (Obi et al., 2018). We can safely say that some men in Nigerian society are now recognizing the need to allow women to pursue their life goals and become relevant in society without being judged or lacking crucial support (Bowie, 2020). In the same vein of societal support, Participant 7 adduced the early sales she made in her small-scale manufacturing business to the support she got from her local network of friends and families and the residents’ association group in her neighbourhood,

“During our monthly residents’ association meeting, I took a few samples of my product with me to advertise my product, create awareness, and seek patronage. I was surprised to sell them off at the meeting. My close friends and family also helped in selling some products. A member of the association who does graphic designs volunteered to help refine my visual advert materials and make them more attractive at a token.”

The cushioning effect and motivation that support from close relations and networks give an entrepreneur, especially in the initial stage, cannot be over-emphasized (Lawan, 2017). For Participant 7, the support she got gave her a soft landing in her transitioning experience to
become an entrepreneur. It is always said that everyone needs support, regardless of how small it seems, to encourage them in whatever venture they deem fit to embark on. However, participant 5 had a rather unpleasant experience with support within her local network. Like other participants, she expressed the significance of mentorship in the entrepreneurial journey. An excerpt from our conversation,

“I read a lot about this established female entrepreneur and contacted her. She invited me to her entrepreneurial workshop, which I gladly attended with high optimism and hoped to connect and network. I was happy I found a female business mentor and was interested in being her mentee. But on several occasions, my emails went unattended to nor replied to. I felt bad not knowing why she wasn’t responding, but I had to move on. I thought being a woman would increase my chances of getting business support from a fellow woman in the same line of business”.

Participant 5’s experience might not be usual, but it can also not be trivialised. However, in the transition process, access to valuable mentorship could be considered a great plus for a beginner entrepreneur to learn the ropes from someone experienced in the early stages of entrepreneurship (Lawan, 2017, p. 247). Participant 5 could have benefited from connecting with an experienced entrepreneur (Lawan, 2017, p.247). Female entrepreneurs can leverage the possibilities of networking to access the psychological and moral support needed to reduce the tension associated with the early stages of entrepreneurship (Lawan, 2017, p.247).

4.2.2. Gender Stereotyping

Almost all the participants for this study reported that they have encountered cases of gender stereotyping or being treated biasedly based on gender. According to their report, most of these experiences were at the initial stages of their entrepreneurial adventure, especially in their transition stages from employees to entrepreneurs. Participant 6 met with a dead end and was unfairly judged based on her gender when she was attempting to secure an office space, an apartment for her business; she said,

“A property agent took me to a vacant office space, and I liked the location, especially for my business visibility. We sealed the deal, and I made the payment. I went to sign the documents and get the keys from the agent, whom the property owner accompanied.
Seeing me, the property owner asked that I come to get the keys in the company of my husband. I was unmarried at this time, so I told him that. He immediately became angry at the property agent, asking him why he would rent an apartment to a single lady without family responsibilities. My money was refunded, and I had to secure another office space for my business”.

This is an instance of systemic gender bias. While the general tradition regarding female property acquisition and ownership (property rights) in Nigerian society might construct a negative perception about the character of a single woman being morally irresponsible (Moses et al., 2015), recent development, especially in the female entrepreneurial world, seem to debunk this claim. But for Participant 1, the reason why Participant 6 was denied the right to rent a property was the same reason her landlord freely rented out his apartment for her business use without gender prejudice, Participant 1 shared,

“*My landlord was such a nice person. He had six female children and liked my entrepreneurial zeal and passion. Although I was a young unmarried lady then, he allowed me to rent the office space I used in his property during the early stage of my business. He encouraged me, and I had a seamless rental transaction with him*”.

Participant 1’s experience supports the notion that systemic gender bias does not always come to play in all scenarios (Nwagbara, 2020). According to the popular saying, “there is always an exception to the rule”, Participant 1’s experience could pass as a reasonable exception example, especially in the Nigerian context. On gender stereotyping, Participant 7 shared an exciting story about her personal experience,

“*Each time I travel to the remote areas to get raw production materials for my business, especially when I was still new to the business and new to my suppliers, I always get the strange look as to how a woman will come to get large quantity raw materials alone in such a location*”.

Business ownership and operation, especially the ones that require negotiation, huge financial capital, and procurement of materials in large quantities, generally tend to be seen as being the prerogative of the male gender (Nelson et al., 2009; Njeru & Njoka, 2001). However, I conceive that possessing the basic human physical features (hands, legs, brain) needed to actualize and
participate in this capacity by both genders automatically categorizes such tendencies and assumptions as gender stereotyped. Another revealing conversation on gender stereotyping by Participant 5 opens a new perspective,

“Some clients even think that I cannot singlehandedly manage this capacity of business and always ask for the “real owner” of the business (maybe my father or husband) when they want to transact business that involves a significant financial value, I sometimes show them my Certificate of Incorporation to prove my ownership of the business”.

Participant 5’s experience is a close-home example of gender stereotyping because it outrightly undermines a woman's capacity to functionally own and operate a business, regardless of the size or type. Corroborating this Participant’s experience, women are allowed in some Nigerian communities to own businesses and generate money, so far, the money generated, and the business is not in large capacities (Lawan, 2017, p. 252). However, encounters such as this and others in this section could be classified as a form of glass ceiling experienced by these female entrepreneurs, its relevance to this study will be duly discussed in chapter five.

4.3. **Ambition and Capability**

The themes of ambition and capability were repeatedly decoded in the conversation with all participants for this study. This theme reveals the nexus between their personal goals and aspirations and their capability to actualize them, attesting to their optimism and mastery. Regarding ambition, the participants were motivated, and shared similar levels of entrepreneurial passion needed to achieve their goals. They also narrated their experience of how their educational and marital status impacted their perceived entrepreneurial ambition and capability.

4.3.1. **Educational and Social Status**

As earlier discussed in Participant 6’s experience with securing a space for her business, the society seems to accord respect, give credence, or a benefit of doubt to the social status of married women, than they are likely to do for a single lady. Participant 6 went further to say,
“The Nigerian society does not seem to recognize or respect an unmarried lady, especially when she dares to venture into a business or pick up a career in a field known as the men’s profession. An unmarried woman is often not taken seriously”.

Here, women’s capacity, suggestively in the Nigerian context, to own and manage a business is perceived to be directly linked to their marital status (Bowie, 2020). Although this participant’s experience is one that can thwart their entrepreneurial zeal and doggedness, she reports that such scenarios only encouraged her to conquer the challenge. She shared,

“My dreams, goals and aspirations are big enough to keep pushing me to succeed. I knew from the onset that my entrepreneurial journey might be a bumpy ride with the social acceptance level of female entrepreneurship in my environment. However, I am determined and very optimistic”.

Truthfully, entrepreneurial engagements can be related to difficulties, capable of challenging one’s level of determination to succeed as an entrepreneur. However, irrespective of barriers such as hostile and harsh social conditions women encounter as entrepreneurs, they still make outstanding efforts to succeed (Moses et al., 2015). Furthermore, being educated is one of those efforts. Correspondingly, one could conceive that being educated could be a positive point towards a smooth entrepreneurial journey as being married would. As sincere and truthful as that could be, for Participant 4, it was a different ball game,

“My in-laws and sometimes my husband were defensive, especially during a conversation. Even if I make an innocent comment, they quickly relate my comment to the fact that I am well educated and run a business independently.”

Participant 4’s experience of being both educated and married could be a rare and overwhelming one regarding the opposition she encounters in her home front. Most fathers and husbands often restrict their daughters from exploring opportunities in the business world, intending to protect them from the harsh reality that exists in the business world (Mordi et al., 2010; Arenius & Minniti, 2003). In general, I conceive that being educated and married should be a confidence-boosting combination for female entrepreneurs, which gives them an edge, especially in managing their business operations, and does not undermine their capability in any reasonable way.
4.3.2. Ambition and Sense of Fulfilment
All seven participants in this study displayed a clear entrepreneurial career path for which they had the blueprints and mechanisms to achieve their goals. They were determined to succeed, although their ambition was sometimes perceived as stepping boundaries and being overambitious. Participant 1 shared,

“During the early years of my transition into becoming an entrepreneur, I often had meetings with business partners. But, because it was a tech business, my initiatives, enthusiasm, and contributions were sometimes seen as abnormal, coming from a woman”.

Confirming Participant 1’s ordeal, Atkinson et al. (2007) opined that the “heroic masculinized” acceptable image of an entrepreneur negatively impacts female entrepreneurs; it supports the view of women not being taken seriously nor given requisite recognition as entrepreneurs. Moreover, this thwarts women’s motivation to succeed as entrepreneurs (Bowie, 2020). At this juncture, I would like to translate Participant 1’s experience as being brave, proactive, and striving for mastery in her field of interest and expertise. Although striving for mastery and expertise requires being more logical and less sensual, which tends to tilt towards men’s supposed prerogative than the female’s. On this note, she shared further,

“People often relate any logical exercise to reflect more of masculinity than feminine. But I think every woman has an appreciable measure of analytical reasoning capabilities, especially regarding business operations”.

It may be true that business operations require being logical, but the sensual aspect that relates to gaining satisfaction from the dividends of being an ambitious female entrepreneur is reported in Participant 3’s experience, she recalls,

“I am happy my doggedness paid off; I am beginning to see the result of being focused and ambitious. It pays to stay committed to one’s life aspirations. Owning a thriving business has enabled me to pay salaries to my staff and give them soft loans without recourse to hierarchical approval or long waiting time. It feels so good to call the shots; I am fulfilled in that regard, even if I now work more hours”.
Some female entrepreneurs’ business goal is to be independent, a source of inspiration, and a role model to other people (Lawan, 2017, p. 235). With Participant 3’s experience and other participants for this study, one could conclude that there is indeed a connection between being ambitious and getting a sense of fulfillment, irrespective of how important or not the scenario may appear. This is because the former seems to yield the latter eventually.

4.3.3. Capability and Self-Development

Five of the seven research participants had similar experiences about a particular period when their entrepreneurial prowess and intellectual capabilities were questioned when I asked them to describe their perceived similarities and differences between a man's and a woman’s intellectual capabilities and entrepreneurial ability to run a business securely. They were quick to state that intellectual capabilities are the same regardless of the gender in question but mentioned a salient point that gender stereotyping has made women marginalized in this regard. Participant 2 shared,

“*There is a general notion that the business world is a man's world. Women are incapacitated and lack required intelligence and expertise when it comes to managing in the business world, especially in the Nigerian context.*”

While Participant 2 may be correct to some extent, recent developments, especially the proliferation of fast-rising female entrepreneurs in Nigeria (Bowie, 2020), debunks this statement to a reasonable extent. However, Participant 5 took the discussion a step further by highlighting an inherent feminine attribute which qualifies them to run a business as an entrepreneur successfully,

“*Women are natural multitaskers; we can play multiple roles simultaneously and still achieve desired results simultaneously. So, I believe we are more capable than most men in the entrepreneurial scene.*”

Women can be mothers, sisters, wives, and career women… they can see beyond the present, predict future occurrences, and prepare for it (Antonio Rios, 2022). Although Participant 2 made a valuable submission about women being multitaskers, there is still a place for personal development and education to accentuate her claim further. Responding to this, Participant 7 said,
“I agree that women are intrinsically multitaskers, but we must also continually develop our virtues to hone our entrepreneurial skills. There are many requisite educational materials and resources online that we can make use of to keep us up to date. We can also tap into our network resources to gain shared knowledge”.

However, adequate training and education are prerequisites to developing entrepreneurial skills as it gives female entrepreneurs direction and the ability to negotiate their rights profitably (Adekola et al., 2015). Also, the intellectual capacity needed to diversify, access novel market strategies, and exploit opportunities for professional development can only be acquired with prior access to entrepreneurial training and education (Olaoye & Dabiri, 2017). As the saying goes, “Knowledge is power”. Arguably, anyone, not only female entrepreneurs, who continuously seek to develop themselves in their chosen area of expertise, sustain the capacity for unprecedented growth. This means that women can leverage the wealth of experience of their colleagues within their network to soar, avoiding the mistakes of their predecessors.

4.4. Struggles
As the name implies, this theme states the findings of this research which relates to the challenges faced by these female entrepreneurs and their coping responses, especially during the transitioning process. Expectedly, the transition into becoming entrepreneurs from paid jobs took a lot of work. They all had varied roadblock experiences in their transition journeys. A few subthemes emerged,

4.4.1. Financial Challenges as a New Business Owner
Agreeably, encountering financial challenges as a new business owner is not an uncommon phenomenon. However, the degree to which this affects entrepreneurial ventures can be different. Participant 7 shared,

“Access to funds for financing my business became a herculean task. The only loan I could secure to start my business from my bank came with the help of my bank manager, who thinks he is doing me a favour rather than considering the prospects and growth of my business... recently, the Lagos government is striving to make entrepreneurs thrive through quick loans and financial education.”
In concordance with Participant 7’s ordeal, finances are the most challenging hurdle to scale when starting a business. This may be attributable to the snobbish attitude of institutional banks (Aina, 2003). The “poorest of the poor” (women) lack dedicated channels to access bank loans (Thompson, 2002; Iheduru, 2002). All seven participants reported that obtaining business loans from business banks, especially at the business infancy stage, was nearly impossible since they are yet to be firmly established and gain business credibility. Most had to turn to close friends and family for soft loan assistance to kickstart or manage their businesses. To support this assertion, Lawal (2017, p. 232) found that some female entrepreneurs are fortunate enough to have supportive family and friends who invest in their businesses. The area of tax remittances for Participant 1 was another problem area she needed to solve quickly before it flushed her business down the drain; she shared that,

“In the early years of my business, paying business taxes was always a cause for concern. I could not afford to hire an accountant, so I often paid a lot of money as I did not know how to calculate my business tax accurately. However, paying tax as an entrepreneur was different, compared to when I was an employee when taxes were automatically deducted from my pay even before my account got credited”.

In accordance with Participant 1’s experience, high business taxation has been verified to be a significant impediment to the development of small-scale businesses in Nigeria (Atawodi & Ojeka, 2012). Furthermore, the unavailability of net profits based on progressive income tax rates is a significant encumbrance of female entrepreneurs’ business growth (Adebisi & Gbegi, 2013).

4.4.2. Authority Assertion and Female Leadership
All seven research participants for this study reported challenges regarding asserting their authority and constituting female leadership in their respective businesses. The masculine spirit in men makes it difficult for them to respect female leadership. Participant 2 narrated that,

“I have 25 staff and three supervisors working for me, but I often notice that the men, especially the male supervisors, are hesitant to take orders from me, although they turned a new leaf after I had a meeting with them”.

Participant 2’s experience with authority assertion, even in her own office space, may indicate what obtains in Nigerian society at large. Patriarchal thought systems significantly undermine
women’s business leadership and management capacity (Brush et al., 2009; Ali & Salisu, 2015). Similarly, Participant 5 recalled her experience with this when she was in her previous employment,

“Sometimes when I assign responsibilities and duties to my subordinates as a team lead, they reluctantly carry them out or do it grudgingly”.

Buttressing Participant 2’s statement, Participant 3 said,

“I was afraid to give orders in the early years of my manufacturing business because I did not want to lose the few men employed in my small business. I was always careful and chose my words when addressing them until I could no longer entertain their excesses... Based on my experience and discussion with some men in my circle, men feel relegated and offended when a woman exercises her leadership skills”.

This is a case of deeply rooted male-dominating traditional beliefs. This wrong perception of women’s leadership capabilities strongly drives male dominance, primarily assigning family oriented roles and responsibilities to women (Adekola et al., 2015). Conceivably, this disposition from the male gender towards female leadership indirectly breeds overdependence on men at the expense of female freedom to assert authority.

4.4.3. Independence and Competitiveness

Generally, it is said that men do not like competing with women, probably because they find it offensive, insulting their high masculine pedigree. Participant 4 shared that,

“Men often grow older to become threatened by women, and they begin to compete with women even for the slightest reason”.

Thinking about this generally, I conceive that the supposed place of women in Nigerian society breeds this type of competitiveness. However, the competitiveness theme resonates well within the context of studying the experiences of Nigerian female entrepreneurs residing in Lagos. Lagos State is perceived to be the most competitive business environment in Nigeria. The entrepreneurial adventure is highly competitive, competing for credibility, client base, and raw material (Lawan, 2017). Relatedly, Participant 6 shared that,
“The whole notion of competitiveness, especially between men and women in the entrepreneurial world, stems from the perceived position of women in the society as being homely, subservient, supportive and submissive, undermining the value of a woman’s work”.

The danger is that it makes women dependent on men in their lives (Mordi et al., 2010). This overdependence, in turn, limits female entrepreneurs' potential to manage successful businesses independently (Moses et al., 2015). Responding to Participant 6, Participant 5 mentions a salient point about the genesis of competition between the genders. Relating it to female independence, she said,

“Being an entrepreneur gives the woman a high sense of independence. Men perceive this as a demerit, so they compete to always be in control. To be an independent woman has always been my dream; I love being at least financially independent”.

A patriarchal society frowns at female independence (Jamali, 2009). It might be funny to explain Participant 6’s experience in the light of men being agitated and uncomfortable at the thought of them losing their traditional grip on women. It may be startling for them to come to terms with the fact that the luxury of “lordship” they enjoyed for years is gradually fading away. To corroborate this, the African society, Nigeria in particular, tags a man whose wife has an independent source of income outside the household as either weak to control his wife or not having enough resources to cater to the family’s financial needs (Njeru & Njoka, 2001).

Hence, emphasis and implementation must be made on the need for true independence to promote female entrepreneurial endeavours.

4.5. Summary of Findings
Unfortunately, for this category of women, quitting their jobs and establishing personal businesses came with challenges and bottlenecks, although they’ve recorded successes in their entrepreneurial adventures. Findings revealed that the decision to start a business of their own was nothing close to a smooth ride for these women. They all had different variations of the glass ceiling experience in their traditional employments and transitioning into entrepreneurs. While their various encounters and experiences in their previous workplaces were catalysts for their transition into the entrepreneurial journey, it can be referred to as the glass ceiling metaphor playing out in different forms in their corporate engagements. Interestingly, the
entrepreneurial life had much more in stock for them. During our conversations, they were elated in their transition journey to start a thing of their own and significantly become a major actor, determinants of their economic and social life outcomes, by deciding their entrepreneurial functions.

Surprisingly, one would think that transitioning into being entrepreneurs for these women would end their worries of being marginalized, setting them free of work-related challenges, but that was far from their reality. The findings of this research reveal that there remains a semblance of the glass ceiling effects even after their exit from the corporate world and transitioning into entrepreneurship, although manifesting in diverse capacities and representations. In this study, this represents “the second glass ceiling” effect. All participants experienced various business obstacles in their transition journeys. While some women made costly financial decisions and encountered difficulties in registering their companies, obstacles such as limited access to acquiring business loans, gender stereotyping, patriarchy, and sociocultural limitations were recurrent themes in their stories. Notably, a substantial percentage of the participants were surprised at the increased work hours they now have as entrepreneurs, defeating the initially perceived entrepreneurial incentives of having a balanced work and life being an entrepreneur. The ongoing research findings and thematic analysis in this chapter are undoubtedly interesting. We will now proceed to chapter five to discuss these findings from the appropriate theoretical lens to answer the questions this research aims to answer.
5. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter will present a discussion of the findings and analysis in Chapter 4, and a conclusion will be drawn to answer the research questions. This qualitative research aims to understand the lived experiences of Nigerian female entrepreneurs in Lagos State, Nigeria, focusing on the transitions they have made from employees to entrepreneurs. Using Schlossberg’s transition theory as this study’s main theoretical framework, the thematic analysis presented in chapter four is discussed in line with the 4S coping systems during transition.

5.1. Schlossberg’s 4s Theory and the Naturally Emerged Themes

This study’s semi-structured interviews birthed four main themes from the stories told by the seven (7) participants, which are (1) Undervalued, (2) Gender Stereotyping, Social and Family Support, (3) Ambition and Capability, (4) Struggles. The discussion in this chapter will now present the nexus between the findings and the theoretical framework of Schlosberg’s transition theory. However, the theoretical framework amplified the findings of this study, travelling through time and space (Jørgensen, 2020), of the transitions of moving in, moving through, and moving out, creating a fine blend of the 4S coping systems as illustrated in the chat below.
**Transition: Moving In**
Female Entrepreneurs Decided to Transition from Employees to Entrepreneurs

**Transition: Moving Through**

**Situation**
Theme: Undevalued

**Self**
Theme: Ambition & Capability

**4 S’s**

**Support**
Theme: Gender Stereotyping, Social & Family Support

**Coping**

**Strategies**
Theme: Struggles

**Transition: Moving Out**
Established Female Entrepreneurs with Lessons Learnt, now Mentors.

*Figure 1: Representation of Schlossberg’s four Systems of coping with transition.*
5.1.1. **Theme 1: Undervalued**

In this study, all participants had their share of feeling undervalued, though manifesting in different forms and manners. Hence, during their years of engagement in traditional employment settings, they all felt their capabilities were undermined as a woman, unanimously concluding that they were worth more than that and sought career satisfaction in entrepreneurship. For these participants, the undervalued theme manifested as denial of promotion opportunities, lack of recognition, victimization, work-life balance, being overworked and underpaid, lack of opportunity to engage their skills and potential, and being bossed and unhappy. Consequently, in the context of this work, these challenges encountered by these female entrepreneurs will be framed as the “first glass ceiling” – career advancement impediments they experienced in their paid jobs. To buttress my framing technique in this regard, Reinhold (2005) submits that the glass ceiling refers to any barrier hindering qualified individuals from progressing and reaching their full potential, arguably making them seek solace, freedom, and career advancement in entrepreneurship. A vivid example of this is Participant 7’s narration, a new mother who lamented about how she did not enjoy a balanced work and life and could not be productive at work, nor even advance her career, due to the company’s eight weeks of maternity leave provision, hence, contributing to her decision to become self-employed. Such a situation stresses women and is a leading cause of their exit from the corporate work environment (Nwagbara, 2020).

Consequently, the undervalued theme resonates with the first phase of Schlossberg’s transition theory, Situation, taking the transition from employee to an entrepreneur as an event of transition triggered by the glass ceiling experiences, they had in their previous jobs. They were all sure of the exact situation and timing that led to their decision to become entrepreneurs, although their decision was initially unanticipated. An unforeseen life incident that happens to an individual is referred to as an unanticipated transition (Schlossberg, 2011). The situation that precipitated their exit from the corporate world took control of their lives, changing their roles and altering their behaviours (Schlossberg, 2011). The situation phase is characterized by factors like the transition event, duration, timing, and concurrent stress (Schlossberg, 2011). This represents the first step in the “moving through” transition stage.

The situation phase during transition is susceptible to regular distortions, which impact the transitioner’s propensity to cope (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). Hence, the transitioner needs to regularly assess, most importantly, the timing and duration of the situation (Chickering
& Schlossberg, 1995). Consequently, these female entrepreneurs were wise to accurately determine their situation, duration, and timing. Over 80% of them remained employees while starting and running their businesses on the side until when they were sure it was time for them to quit their jobs and fully become entrepreneurs. They mastered the requisite timing and duration of their situation for transition and remained employees until they could launch their businesses. This move was also a way to cope with the concurrent stressors of a critical life-changing event, capable of distorting their financial stability, moving from being financially secure with their jobs to risking financial insecurity.

The major takeaway from the undervalued theme representing the situation phase in Schlosberg’s transition theory is that these women experienced a glass ceiling in diverse dimensions in their previous places of work, which precipitated their choice of becoming entrepreneurs from employees. They recognized this situation as a bad one. According to the findings of this research, their situation was expected, being heavily characterized by the socially constructed identity of a woman in Nigerian society. The situation phase for them was the beginning stage of their transition journey.

5.1.2. Theme 2: Gender Stereotyping, Social and Family Support
Gender stereotyping was a cross-cutting theme, very evident throughout the in-depth interview. This theme subtly paints a vivid picture of the foundation upon which the framework of this study stands. Most of the participants in this study reported how their gender affected their business both positively and negatively. They narrated their experiences of expectations while doing their business and how they were discriminated against and victimized based on gender. But some were lucky enough to be supported by the men in their lives. This context has been extensively illustrated in the findings segment of this study as deeply entrenched in the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society (Lawan, 2017). These realities could be adduced to social, religious, and cultural beliefs in some developing countries, which are against women working, especially female entrepreneurs (Jamali, 2009). Interestingly, some of these developing countries categorized entrepreneurship as a career not suitable for females but fit for males (Aidis et al., 2007).

According to the findings, these themes were evident in their experiences of gaining access to properties for their business use concerning unfavourable property acquisition and inheritance
laws (Fitzgerald, 2011). Also, some of the study participants were seen to be incapable of owning businesses with substantial financial capital, undermining their business prowess (Njeru & Njoka, 2001). The participants disclosed society’s perception of a woman not being capable of running a business independently unless the business is owned by the men in their lives, father, husband, or brother. Subsequently, these social, religious, and cultural stereotypes diffusely inhibit female entrepreneurship through laws, regulations, and policies that assume the supremacy of the male (Fitzgerald, 2011). Nevertheless, few participants enjoyed having supportive family, friends, and associations that assisted them in various ways to reduce the burden of transitioning from paid employment to becoming entrepreneurs. Some participants were shut out from gaining business experience, networks, and partnerships from experienced and successful entrepreneurs. For example, a particular participant tried to harness the benefits of business networking but could not, although she believed she could leverage being of the same gender as her prospective business mentor. However, this kept a dent in the belief that upcoming female entrepreneurs can always connect to gain experience and partnerships with successful female entrepreneurs. At least this participant’s case could buttress this fact.

In line with the course of this study, gender stereotyping and social and family support are in the Support phase of Schlosberg’s transition theory. The success and psychological wellbeing of an individual in transition is primarily a derivative of the support they get from their family, friends, networks, associations, and society (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). The support phase takes stock of the available sources of help and assistance at the transitioner’s disposal (Schlossberg, 2001). Chickering and Schlossberg (1995) posit the support to include some or any of the following: **Affection** – this means understanding, care, and love; **Affirmation** – acknowledging your transition as appropriate; **Aid or Assistance** – social acceptance, social capital, networking, or mentorship; **Feedback** – giving answers that provide meaning to situations, proffer solutions, confirm or question your understanding, or give a divergent opinion (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995, p. 50).

For this study, most participants lacked the support of the larger society (Nigeria) in which they were operating their businesses in terms of cultural norms and societal beliefs, and this was reflected in the way they were perceived as “odd ones out” for not aligning their career goals with the expectations of the society’s patriarchal structure of male dominance (Ali & Salisu, 2015, p. 32). Thus, all participants reported gender stereotyping as a hindrance to being entirely accepted in society. As a result, they initially did not have the societal backing and acceptance,
especially from the aging population whose belief systems were still deeply rooted in patriarchy and women's identity in society. But because they were doing business in the most civilized state of the country, some of these participants were able to leverage on the efforts made by the government of Lagos state to alleviate poverty by empowering and encouraging the women in the state, garnering societal support for the women to be a recognized voice in the economy of the state through entrepreneurship (Lawan, 2017). As a result, they created social support and acceptance for themselves by harnessing the diverse business opportunities the vast population of Lagos state has to their business advantage. This is what Chickering, and Schlossberg (1995) referred to as the transitioner being able to locate, connect to, and access other available support systems (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995).

Interestingly, most of these participants had the support of their family, friends, significant other, and association. This means they gained support through affection, affirmation, aid, and assistance, and feedback during their transition (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). The efficacy of support cannot be overemphasized, especially familial support. Family is the principal institution for material, emotional and psychological support (Inman, 2000). The support system of coping refers to the emotional and social resources transitioners can access to manage the challenges of a significant life transition (Schlosberg, 2001). For female entrepreneurs in Nigeria, it entails seeking support from family and friends, access to mentorship from successful entrepreneurs, and mentorship opportunities with other women in business. Access to these kinds of resources is essential in helping female entrepreneurs in Nigeria navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship, supplying the needed dosage of timely emotional support, guidance, and advice. Ultimately, the presence of these supports systems critically impacts women’s ability to cope with the trials of entrepreneurship, heightening their chances of success in the business scene. Worthy of note is a particular participant’s experience of being snubbed by a prospective avenue of support through networking with experienced individuals (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). These experiences, coupled with the gender stereotyping discussed above, could be addressed as major bottlenecks in the transition journeys of these women from employees to entrepreneurs. Hence, in the context of this work, it is framed as the existence of a “second glass ceiling” experience for these female entrepreneurs.

5.1.3. Theme 3: Ambition and Capability
The theme of ambition and capability emerged from the analysis and findings of the in-depth interview with the participants, where they narrated their lived experiences as they transited.
As these women transitioned from employees to entrepreneurs, they maintained an ambitious outlook on themselves. They all had at least a university degree and an idea; even if they were yet to wholly comprehend what the entrepreneurial world had in stock for them, they seemed well prepared for it. They were very optimistic as transitioners from one significant phase of their life to another, believing in themselves and their capabilities as women, irrespective of other stakeholders' image of them. Relatedly, one of the participants was perceived as being over-ambitious, exuding over-confidence because she dared to contribute during business talks, especially in the men’s circle. Moreso, being unfairly judged and considered unserious as an unmarried lady is somewhat alarming. Another participant was also perceived as domineering by her in-laws and husband because of her educational and entrepreneurial status. This means the woman has gained control of her life during the transition and is self-aware.

Subsequently, findings revealed their lived experiences as being perceived to be logically bankrupt based on their gender but sensually potent; hence cannot participate in the men’s world of business affairs. Nevertheless, these women remained unflinching and resolute in pursuing entrepreneurial excellence. Irrespective of barriers such as hostile and harsh social conditions women encounter as entrepreneurs, they still make outstanding efforts to succeed (Moses et al., 2016). They leveraged on a woman's inherently dominant characteristics as efficient multitaskers to strive and gain mastery at what they do, acknowledging that there is a need to keep themselves abreast of recent happenings in their world through the quest for knowledge and educating themselves. They went head-on, approaching their transition with a fighting spirit, expressing their capabilities to take charge of the situation (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995).

The theme of ambition and capability represents the Self-phase in Schlossberg’s transition theory to describe how the participant’s personalities and character traits played out in their transition. Self explains an individual’s psychological resources and personal characteristics to cope with the vicissitudes of major transitions (Schlossberg, 2001). This study’s findings support this theoretical framework because a person’s traits significantly impact how they experience and view transition with respect to their gender and socioeconomic status.

Psychological resources refer to how an individual’s behaviours and character affects how well they cope and manage their transitions (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). These female entrepreneurs’ lived experiences portray an image of discouragement, ambiguity, and
sensitivity. Some did not realize how strong they were and how they had remained resilient from when they were employees to when they became entrepreneurs until during the interview. They became vulnerable but coped even if, at some points, they had doubts due to external pressures. They used self-competence to conquer challenges during their transitions, learn lessons, and move on. They did not allow emotions to cloud their sense of judgment because if they did, their transition period would have been more prolonged than usual, with possibilities of other challenges springing up. Some of them drew inner strengths from the sense of fulfilment they derived from being able to create jobs and positively impact lives.

Furthermore, women tend to encounter feelings of imposter syndrome, fear of failure, and self-doubt, especially when transitioning from employees to entrepreneurs. This can limit their ability to take risks and pursue entrepreneurial goals. This was true in the case studied, but these women’s personalities and psychological resources fuelled their tenacity. The downside is that perpetually doubting women’s capabilities usurp their self-efficacy and self-confidence and will gradually make them feel disappointed (Participant 1). This is framed as the “second glass ceiling” encountered by these female entrepreneurs in their transition journey from employees to entrepreneurs. Addressing these internal inhibitions is critical for female entrepreneurs in Nigeria to build the self-assurance required to leap over obstacles and succeed in the business scene.

5.1.4. Theme 4: Struggles
This theme chronicles the primary obstacles encountered by the participants as they created their businesses. The road from employee to entrepreneur for all participants in this study was quite rough, starting from the gender-based marginalization, discrimination, and victimization they encountered in paid employment to myriad obstacles already inherent in entrepreneurship. Their major struggle was access to financial capital to start or run their businesses. Since women were incapacitated in property acquisition and inheritance due to the laws of the land, most of them do not have the principal collateral (land and houses) that banks require for them to access loans (Moses et al., 2016). Some banks also do not accord significance to female entrepreneurs’ business proposals when they approach them for loans, as they do not believe in the viability of their business turnover being able to repay the loans (Iheduru, 2002; Aina, 2003). Again, this is based on gender discrimination which is unconnected to their creditworthiness. Apart from stringent, unrelaxed, and unfavourable conditions to access financial capital, the participants also reported the problem of multiple taxation, having
crippling effects on their business survival and growth. This is reportedly pronounced in the country's commercial capital, Lagos state, where these women have their businesses. High business taxes in Nigeria have been identified as an impediment to the growth of entrepreneurial enterprises (Atawodi & Ojeka, 2012).

Expectedly, as Nigeria is known to be a patriarchal society, some participants reported that they struggled with asserting authority in their businesses, especially in the early years of their entrepreneurial journeys, due to the societal perception of female leadership. For example, a participant recalled her experience of giving orders to the male supervisors in her business who find it challenging to carry out orders; one of them outrightly told her before he angrily dropped his resignation letter that, “Woman! You cannot order me around…I am a man! Accord me some respect, I have a woman like you at home as my wife”. This singular attitude stench of an entitlement sense of superiority and dominance deeply entrenched in patriarchy which supports male dominance (Adekola et al., 2015). Unfortunately, this breeds overdependence of women on men at the expense of the female freedom to assert authority needed to develop their potential to independently manage businesses as entrepreneurs (Moses et al., 2016).

Conversely, entrepreneurship has a vivid undertone of independence, and this negates the tenets of a patriarchal society such as Nigeria (Lawan, 2017). Evidently, as one participant reiterated, this independence seems to bruise the men's ego, especially in the business world, and in return, breed competitiveness that stems from the socially constructed reality of male dominance, which is an unhealthy combination for female entrepreneurial success. It is truly a vicious cycle, frustrating the efforts of female entrepreneurs.

Applying a corresponding phase in Schlossberg’s transition theory to this thematic analysis, the most appropriate is Strategies; it goes in tandem with struggles, and the latter precipitate the former. The strategies phase refers to the specific techniques that individuals may use to overcome or manage the transition challenges. As these female entrepreneurs transitioned from employees to entrepreneurs, they had critical challenges with finances, asserting authority as women, societal perception of female leadership, independence, and competitiveness. However, they all developed relevant strategies to cope with the struggles that accompanied their transitions. In transition theory, a particular coping strategy or approach capable of solving all problems or reducing the stress accompanying transitions does not exist (Schlossberg, 2011). Hence, these female entrepreneurs individually devised tailored approaches to tackling
their challenges during the transition around information seeking and direct action (Anderson et al., 2012). As a result, some participants got financial assistance from family and friends, could access bank loans eventually, and became tax-literate or employed professionals in the field. In addition, the participants reported that networking with successful entrepreneurs, developing viable business plans, partnerships, training, and education were practical strategies for coping with the struggles they encountered during the transition.

Surprisingly, the strategies’ theme is also reflected in the “moving in” transition stage – their decision to move from employees to entrepreneurs. Thus, they fragmented their strategies to correspond with every transition stage. Relatedly, Chickering & Schlossberg (1995) opined that “You can break down the components of change in order to evaluate what makes things work for you, or what hinders your adaptation so you can discover clues as to what is next to do” (p.63). Thus, the participants of this study engaged in effective coping strategies to help them feel more in control of their transition and provide them with practical tools and skills to succeed in their new entrepreneurial adventure. But some of the coping strategies of the study participants to reformulate the situation by asserting authority as a female leader and being independent and competitive seems unacceptable to the Nigerian patriarchal society. These strategies also posed obstacles and a second glass ceiling.

5.2. Discussion
This study described the various transition stages Nigerian female entrepreneurs have gone through from being employed to becoming entrepreneurs, interpreting each phase; – Situation, Support, Self, and Strategies – according to the natural emergence of themes and analysis in the findings. Findings suggest that glass ceiling effects were evident through these transition stages. This seems to be the main reason they exit corporate to become entrepreneurs. However, the implication of this for corporate employers is untapped human resources resulting in high employee turnover. Furthermore, the success of an organization can be impacted by understanding and exploiting each employee's talents and skills and providing an equal performance and reward environment. This can also increase employee engagement and job satisfaction and decrease turnover rates. To mitigate this, programs that teach diversity and inclusiveness skills should be created if a company is in this situation, especially for people in charge of hiring and managing teams.
Moreover, despite transitioning to entrepreneurship, these female entrepreneurs still encountered significant challenges, framed as a second glass ceiling, in starting and growing their businesses, much of it attributable to the patriarchal structures prevalent in Nigerian society and lack of financial resources (Bowie, 2020). However, they engaged in entrepreneurial storytelling to gain legitimacy, rewrite their destinies, and create new knowledge about their existence as female entrepreneurs. Through entrepreneurial storytelling, individual entrepreneurial activities and experiences are rationalized and can be comprehensively understood, thereby creating new knowledge (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). Being self-confident, determined, tenacious, and focused helped them scale through these obstacles, although some secured educational and financial support from the Lagos state government. This implies that the type and character of the business environment women engage in entrepreneurial activity determine their likelihood of success. This environment is influenced by various variables, including national regulations, culture, and socioeconomic considerations (Garba, 2011; Emmanuel, 2013). In many ways, these variables play a crucial part in mitigating the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs.

These Nigerian female entrepreneurs moved into their transition with symbolic liabilities such as limited networks, financial capital, and predetermined destiny trajectory. Similarly, as they journeyed through the different phases of their transitions, they cultivated coping mechanisms and entrepreneurial skills, which they engaged in overcoming the challenges framed as “the second glass ceilings” in the context of this work. As a result, these participants successfully transitioned from employees to reputable entrepreneurs in their fields of expertise with significant assets. Moreover, during their entrepreneurial journeys, they have gained significant business knowledge they lacked in the early stage of their entrepreneurship, which repositioned them as high-revenue entrepreneurs who now mentor aspiring entrepreneurs, especially upcoming female entrepreneurs.

By extension, the extent to which these study participants have been able to shatter the second glass ceiling indicates that a significant percentage of Nigerian female entrepreneurs are making headways out from the clutches of their predetermined trajectory of second fiddle. Storytelling was instrumental in achieving this feat. Jørgensen (2020) posits that storytelling is narratives used to transform existing norms or create new opportunities. Studies reveal that they leveraged on the power of storytelling to create new opportunities, as they gradually altered the society's preconception regarding their expertise, intellect, and leadership
capacitates, thriving in the business world and other significant spheres of Nigerian society (Sarpong et al., 2022).

In this study, these Nigerian female entrepreneurs leveraged the voice and advantage of entrepreneurship to create indelible cracks in the glass ceiling as a formidable voice to be reckoned with, making a grand entry into traditionally male-dominated social, political, and economic spheres in private, public, and non-governmental sectors (Bowie, 2021). Their experience showed that training, networking, partnership, and mentorship were instrumental to achieving this feat. They engaged storytelling as a performative instrument of new beginnings to intercept existing power relations (Jørgensen, 2020) and redefine their possibilities.

Furthermore, the transition journeys of these female entrepreneurs helped the researcher discover and identify inherent obstacles in female entrepreneurship in Nigeria, as there seem to be more feats to cover for Nigerian female entrepreneurs to shatter the second glass ceiling completely. Since female entrepreneurship is a viable tool for cracking and ultimately shattering the glass ceiling (Olanrewaju & Fernando, 2020), entrepreneurship ideas like innovative entrepreneurship programs for women can be introduced through public-private partnerships to empower and emancipate women, assist in the identification of potential business opportunities, development of innovative products, and the improvement of product quality to prevent business failures. In addition, entrepreneurial education and skills acquisition subjects should be infused into technical and tertiary teaching curriculums. Also, addressing societal issues like discrimination (customs, religion, and society) against women in entrepreneurship and maintaining an enabling environment in rural and urban areas could significantly advance social and economic inclusion and shatter the entrepreneurial glass ceiling for female entrepreneurs.

5.3. Conclusion

Reiterating what a participant said, – “My journey from being an employee to an entrepreneur was an eventful one, but I will do it all over if I have to”, – connotes satisfaction despite the challenges of entrepreneurship. This suggests that some women who experience slow or no career advancement in the corporate environment may start thinking about leaving their employment and creating their businesses. Apparently, this is not a lasting solution to the glass ceiling issue ravaging Nigerian society and preventing her from harnessing the nation-building attributes inherent in female participation across sectors. Corporate organizations could be
severely affected by the loss of valuable talents and the negative effect of a colossal employee turnover record, with possible negative consequences for their businesses. The glass ceiling issue must be addressed across the board, regardless of the sector – corporate workplace setting or entrepreneurship – to enable women to prosper in any sector they choose.

It is important to reckon with the interests of all stakeholders, in this case, the employees (mainly women), organizations, policymakers, and society, while addressing a social menace like the glass ceiling. Collaboration is essential here because more than one organization is involved in the solution. Additionally, a collaboration between these parties is necessary to promote the nation's image, economy, and social wellness through the creation of a fair, just, and equal environment. This makes room for conversation, negotiation, reflection, and deliberation as well as clear procedures and measures to guarantee that policies, institutions, and management actions are consistently examined and actively updated or adjusted as appropriate.

Specifically, to make significant progress in shattering the second glass ceiling manifesting as impediments to entrepreneurial success for women in Nigeria, female entrepreneurs need access to and control over factors of production like land, capital, labour, equipment, resources, and other entrepreneurial competencies. Therefore, it is expedient that the government and other developmental organizations create a policy framework that addresses strategic women entrepreneurship issues in the following areas: making resources and facilities available to women's associations and forums in order to encourage entrepreneurship involvement and development for sustainable economic transformation through start-up capital policies and supporting the growth of women-owned businesses through technical assistance and education. This is because, apart from the jobs created by corporate organizations with inherent administrative hurdles, supporting female entrepreneurial activities creates readily available jobs and reduces poverty levels, accelerating female empowerment outcomes and propelling broader societal change.

Finally, this study could be explored as a guide to corporate women who intend to become entrepreneurs to equip themselves for a smooth transition into entrepreneurship. This resonates with the theoretical framework of this research. Transition theory assists an individual to end a cycle and start another while implementing ongoing transformative events in their everyday practice (Andersson, Goodman, and Schlossberg, 2012). This paper sparks future research.
interest in examining female entrepreneurial transitions in other Nigerian states for a broader perspective and comparative analysis since this could promote more effective policymaking procedures in Nigeria. Significant transitions from high school to college, from a university education to a new career, and from working life to establishing a family might all be studied using this method.
References


Flick, U. (2018). An Introduction to Qualitative Research. SAGE


High-level Political Forum - Sustainable Development Goals [un.org](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org › hlpf)


HYDE, K. F. 2000. Recognizing deductive process in qualitative research *Qualitative Market Research: An Internal Journal, 3*(2), pp. 82-90


Lagos State Government - Center of Excellent – [https://info@lagosstate.gov.ng](https://info@lagosstate.gov.ng)


OECD (2018). Strengthening social inclusion through inclusive entrepreneurship, Parallel session 5, SME Ministerial Conference, 22-23 February 2018 Mexico City


OLAREWAJU, T., & Fernanado, J. (2020). Gender inequality and female entrepreneurship in developing countries.


Appendix A: Interview Questions

Background Details

Questions that help us understand your professional history.

1. How long did you have a job before launching your own company?
2. What job(s) did you hold?
3. How did you find it to work for your employer(s)?
   i. What drew you to working for another person?
   ii. What about working for another person did you find annoying?
   iii. What advantages did you find in working for someone else?
   iv. What did you find difficult about working for someone else?
4. How long have you owned your own company?
   i. What do you like about being your own boss?
   ii. What about working for oneself do you find annoying?
   iii. What advantages did you find in working for yourself?
   iv. What aspects of working for yourself did you find difficult?
5. Some people may view themselves as entrepreneurs or business owners when they launch their own companies. Would you identify yourself as a business owner or an entrepreneur? Why do you consider yourself a business owner or an entrepreneur?

Individual Perspectives

Questions from an individual's point of view on the change from employee to entrepreneur (Schlossberg's Transition Theory: Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies).

6. How did you first get the notion to launch your own company? (Situation: Schlossberg's Transition Theory).
7. What did you quit your job to become an entrepreneur? (Situation: Schlossberg's Transition Theory).
8. What is your understanding of the glass ceiling? Did you experience it in your previous job? 9. What was it like when you made the decision to go from being an employee to being a business owner? (Situation) (Schlossberg's Transition Theory)
10. What were your initial steps toward transitioning from an employee to an entrepreneur?
11. What personal qualities helped you make the switch from employee to entrepreneur? Self: (Schlossberg's Transition Theory)
12. What aspects of your personality made it challenging for you to make the transition from employee to entrepreneur? (Self: Schlossberg's Transition Theory)
13. What difficulties did you face as you transitioned from being an employee to running your own business? (Situation: Schlossberg's Transition Theory)
14. What coping techniques did you apply to make the move from employee to entrepreneur? (Strategies: Schlossberg’s Transition Theory)
   i.) How did the coping mechanisms (techniques) help you the most during the transition?
ii.) What were the methods (strategies) you tried during the transition that didn't work for you? iii.) What methods (strategies) do you use to get beyond the difficulties you ran into during the transition, if any are different from those you've already talked about?

15. Who or what provided you with support while you made the transition from employee to entrepreneur? *(Support: Schlossberg's Transition Theory)*
   i.) What helped you during the transition, if anything?
   ii.) Did you meet anyone or any organizations that didn't assist you during your transition from employee to entrepreneur?
   iii.) In what ways did they or did they not assist you in the transition?

16. At what moment did you realize you could be your own boss? *(Situation) (Schlossberg’s Transition Theory)*

**Closing Questions**

*Lastly, I'll ask you questions regarding your present situation and the lessons you've learned.*

17. Have you transitioned completely from employee to entrepreneur? If not, what stage of the transition are you at? If you have fully transitioned, how long did it take you to go from being an employee to an entrepreneur?

18. What information would have been helpful to you, if you had access to it during your transition from employee to entrepreneur?
   If any changes have occurred as a result of your transition from employee to entrepreneur,
   what are they?
   i.) Were you assisted by the changes?
   ii.) Were you hindered by the changes?

**Closing Remarks**

*The interview has now come to an end. Do you have any more information or queries you'd want to ask me?*

I sincerely appreciate your participation in this research study for my Master’s thesis. Thank you for your time.
Appendix B – Participant’s consent

Participants Consent Form

Title of research study: Shattering the second glass ceiling: Interpreting the lived experiences of Female Entrepreneurs in Lagos, Nigeria, using Schlossberg’s Transition Theory.

Researcher(s): Amusan Abosede Olufunmilola – The researcher has informed me about the following:

1. The purpose of the study
2. I can withdraw from the study. If so, I don’t have to give a reason for that.
3. All information the researcher gets from me is kept confidential.
4. My name and the name of my organization will be treated with strict confidentiality.

_____________________________________________
Signature and date

_____________________________________________
Printed name