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# Microfinance Access and Women Empowerment in the Far North Region of Cameroon

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*Abstract-* The objective of our paper is to analyze the effects of Microfinance access to women empowerment. The work aims to measure the contribution of Microfinance on women entrepreneurship in the Diamare Division of the Far North Region in Cameroon. To achieve these results, we used data collected from the population established data from Ecam 4. Using the stata 14 to captured the induced effects of this instrument , we used the binary logistic regression model to determine female access to Microfinance. on the results, we recommend that the state through different political, can put in place different instruments to encourage financial services by providing a regulatory system assistance with paying salaries and utility bills. Microfinance is a way forward for women empowerment in Cameroon and particular the Far North region, considered as an economically depressed region by the Cameroonian state. But to achieve this, the government should create an enabling environment in which banks are free to pursue the innovations necessary to reach low-income consumers while realizing profits.

*Keywords:* *microfinance, access, women empowerment, women political participation.*

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# Microfinance Access and Women Empowerment in the Far North Region of Cameroon

Njang Joan Ayamoh [α], Mohammadou Nourou [σ] & Kamgang Ndada Alex [ρ]

*Resume-* L'objectif de notre article est d'analyser les effets de l'accès à la microfinance sur l'autonomisation des femmes. Le travail vise à mesurer la contribution de la Microfinance sur l'entreprenariat féminin dans la Division de Diamare de la Région de l'Extrême Nord au Cameroun. Pour atteindre ces résultats, nous avons utilisé les données collectées auprès de la population établie à partir de Ecam 4. En utilisant le logiciel stata 14 pour capturer les effets induits de cet instrument, nous avons utilisé le modèle de régression logistique binaire pour déterminer l'accès des femmes à la microfinance. Sur la base des résultats, nous recommandons que l'Etat, à travers différentes politiques, puisse mettre en place différents instruments pour encourager les services financiers en fournissant un système de réglementation et une assistance pour le paiement des salaires et des factures. La microfinance est une voie d'avenir pour l'autonomisation des femmes au Cameroun et en particulier dans la région de l'Extrême-Nord, considérée comme une région économiquement déprimée par l'État camerounais. Mais pour y parvenir, le gouvernement doit créer un environnement favorable dans lequel les banques sont libres de poursuivre les innovations nécessaires pour atteindre les consommateurs à faibles revenus tout en réalisant des profits. Il est donc recommandé d'envisager des programmes d'éducation financière et des compétences en matière d'entrepreneuriat ciblant spécifiquement les femmes pauvres vivant dans les zones rurales, afin de tirer pleinement parti du potentiel d'investissement associé aux institutions de microfinance pour promouvoir l'accès à cette gamme de services.

*Mots-clés:* *microfinance, accès, autonomisation des femmes, participation politique des femmes.*

*Abstract-* The objective of our paper is to analyze the effects of Microfinance access to women empowerment. The work aims to measure the contribution of Microfinance on women entrepreneurship in the Diamare Division of the Far North Region in Cameroon. To achieve these results, we used data collected from the population established data from Ecam 4. Using the stata 14 to captured the induced effects of this instrument , we used the binary logistic regression model to determine female access to Microfinance. on the results, we recommend that the state through different political, can put in place different instruments to encourage financial services by providing a regulatory system assistance with paying salaries and utility bills. Microfinance is a way forward for women empowerment in Cameroon and particular the Far North region, considered as an economically depressed region by the Cameroonian state. But to achieve this, the government should create an enabling environment in which banks are free to pursue the innovations necessary to reach low-income consumers while realizing profits. It is therefore recommended to consider financial education programs and entrepreneurship skill specifically targeting poor women living in rural areas, in order to take full advantage of the investment potential associated with Microfinance institutions to promote access to this range of services.

*Keywords:* *microfinance, access, women empowerment, women political participation.*

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## I. Introduction

The Origin of Microfinance has started in 1976 by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh; it has positive impacts on Poor people and societies. Grameen Bank (GB) provides Microfinance services for people in rural regions so they can use the capital for productive work and become financially stable and independent. Muhammad et *al,* (2017). The history of Microfinance is closely linked to poverty reduction. Although the beginning of cooperative savings and credit activities can be traced back as far as in 1849 with the foundation in Rhineland of the first cooperative society of saving and credit by Raiffeisen, it is truly with Yunus in 1976 with the creation of the Gramen Bank that one can situate the birth of "modern Microfinance" (Blondeau, 2006). Microfinance was originally conceived as an alternative to banks, which in most developing countries serve only 5 to 20% of the population (Gallardo *et al*., 2003), and informal moneylenders. With the passage of time, the Microfinance sector has evolved. Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) now have more than 100 million clients and achieve remarkable repayment rates on loans (Cull *et al*, 2009).

The success of Microfinance in Bangladesh has increased the interest of the research community in finance, notably in terms of its potential impact on poverty reduction, and the development of women's economic activities. This upsurge in interest has awakened the conscience of political authorities and economic and financial institutions on the practice and the importance of finance (Guérin, 2005). Furthermore, finance in general, and Microfinance in particular, have been considered as a crucial tool to help in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In this regard, several Microfinance programmes will be developed that target the most vulnerable groups, which are largely comprised of women (Dahoun et al., 2013). Several of these programmes focus mostly on developing countries in general, and on African countries in particular with Cameroon being our focus point and from the Far North Region.



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Despite this, most writers contradict this idea. (Goetz and Sen, 1996) question the level to which Microfinance benefits the women. They do not really see the activities of MFIs to be profitable to women empowerment. (Baham, (1995) also argues that Microfinances divert the attention of women rather than to assist them. So according to them, they have more to profit from their activities with women than they contribute to their life and with this we try to solve the problem of women gaining power and control over their lives, participate in some movement and emancipation. Be able to make some strategic life choices that women have been previously denied from, reaching gender equality rights and responsibility and opportunity of individual will that will not depend whether you are born male or female to empower the women of the Diamare Division.

According to Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of United Nations (UN), women's empowerment means women gaining more power and control over their own lives. Riano, (1994), empowerment is not just individual achievements or assessing certain power positions, but "the way of energizing of individual and collective objects to participate in social movements and process of emancipation. Women empowerment comes from the root of the idea of power (Sharifah, 2015). Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economics strength of individuals and communities of women (Rajeshwari, 2015). Besides that, women's empowerment also can be defined as "women's ability to make strategic life choices which they had been previously denied from" Anjuet *et al.,* (2009). In a nutshell, women's empowerment can also be seen as an important process in reaching gender equality, which is understood to mean that the "rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female" and according to the UN Population Fund, an empowered woman has a sense of self worth.

According to Golla, *et al.,* (2011) women are economically empowered when they have the ability to succeed, power to make and act on economic decisions. In fact, according to UN World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014 there are proven synergies between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability. Women's active participation in decision making facilitates the allocation of public resources to investments in human development priorities including education, health, nutrition, employment and social protection. For example, as female education levels rise, infant and child mortality rates fall and family health improves. Education also increases women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to house and national income. Financial empowerment is a proven set of interventions that helps people with low incomes to move along this spectrum from crisis to stability and onward to opportunity.

## II. Literature Review

A lot of research has been done on the topic of Microfinance access to women empowerment in Cameroon but we are going to specialize on women entrepreneurship that is to see if Microfinance really empowered the women, if women are included in the managerial field of the economic.

Kabeer (2001) outlines three dimensions of empowerment, explaining these are the pathways through which empowerment occur. Resources are in form of material, human or social in form. Resources increase the ability to exercise choice and are the means through which agency is carried out. She makes note of a few distinctions and nuances regarding agency. She distinguishes between passive and active agency. Passive agency means when an action is taken under circumstances with few realizable options, and active agency refers to purposeful behavior. Kabeer also differentiates between agency that is effective agency and transformative agency. Effective agency provides women with greater efficiency in carrying out their roles, whereas transformative agency gives women the ability to challenge the restrictive nature of their roles. Transformative agency provides women with greater ability to consider and respond to the patriarchal constraints in their lives.

Ledgerwood (1999) in his part discussed the impact of policy and regulatory issues on MFIs. Many policy issues are addressed, but two are recognized as playing a large role for sustainability, an appropriate regulatory environment and strong property rights. Woller and Woodworth (2001) cited many impact studies and conclude that governments must "create a macroeconomic environment characterized by stable growth, low inflation, and fiscal discipline". They further suggested that poor macroeconomic, regulatory and trade policies will undermine the viability of small business owners and the MFIs that support them. Hubka and Zaidi (2005) found that governments can help market-based Microfinance by eliminating unfair competition from public institutions; undertaking overall regulatory reform; and improving the overall business environment.

Many evaluations of MFIs have shown that Microfinance services have a positive impact on women (Hashemi *et al*., 1996; Khandker, 2005; Lakwo, 2006; Mahmud, 2003; McNelly & Dunford, 1998, MkNelly & Dunford, 1999; Morduch, 1998; Osmani, 2007; Pitt & Khandker, 1998; Pitt *et al*., 2006; Pitt et al., 2003; Rai & Ravi, 2011; Schuler & Hashemi, 1994; Schuler *et al*., 1996). Hashemi *et al*. (1996) found that credit programs had significant effects on eight different dimensions of

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women's empowerment. They found that women's access to credit was significant determinant of the magnitude of economic contributions reported by women; of the likelihood of an increase in asset holdings in their own names; of an increase in their exercise of purchasing power; of their political and legal awareness as well as of the value of the composite empowerment index (Kabeer, 2001a). In Ghana, MkNellyand Dunford (1998) found that participants experience an increase in monthly non farmine come of 36, compared to 17 for the control group. Pitt and Khandker (1998) found that program credit has a larger effect on the behavior of poor household in Bangladesh when women are the program participants. They also found that annual household consumption expenditure increases 0.22 for every additional 1.22 borrowed by women from credit programs, compared with 0.13 for man. Barnes, Morris and Gaile (1999) found that participation in Microfinance programs had positive impact on client households acquiring assets. Mahmud (2003) found that microcredit program participation has only a limited effect in increasing women's access to choice-enhancing resources, but has a much stronger effect in increasing women's ability to exercise agency in intra-household processes.

Consequently, program participation is able to increase women's welfare and possibility to reduce male bias in welfare outcomes, particularly in poor households. Furthermore, MkNelly and Watetip (1993) found that credit enhanced women empowerment in Thailand, such as increased self-confidence and better cooperation with neighbours. Rai and Ravi (2011) in their paper female empowerment and microfinance found that clients spouses use more health insurance in terms of filling claims than those of non-clients, and that women who are clients make significantly more use of health insurance than non-clients women who have obtained the insurance through their husband. Their findings provide evidence that women who are members of MFIs are more empowered than nonmembers. Becchetti and Castriota (2011) analyses the effectiveness of MFIs as a recovery tool after a natural disaster. In their paper they examine the contribution of MFIs loans in helping people who were hit by tsunami in Sri Lanka in 2004. They found that loans obtained from the MFI after the catastrophic event have a positive and significant effect on the change in real income and in weekly worked hours, and that the impact on performance variables is significantly stronger for damaged than non damaged borrowers. Their study provides a strong evidence for effectiveness of MFIs as recovery tool (Hermes & Lensink, 2011). Kabeer (2005,) stated that 'it becomes apparent that while access to finance services can and does make vital contributions to the economic productivity and social well-being of poor women and their households, it does "automatically" empower women.

"The concept of *Empowerment"* refers to the delegation of some authority and responsibility to employees and involving them in the decision-making process, not in mere job activities, but rather at all. We have been through so many times where people are talking about women empowerment and gender equality. The movements have been around for years. The fact that we can access education, have equal rights, have a quota in parliament or even in the workforce is the blueprint of the movement that has been evolving for decades. The ease of access towards that privilege was not born by itself; it required a persistent hard work by feminists out there. Thus, I think we need to understand how this issue was raised and feminist movements have been revolving.

"Women violence was made as a headline in the 21st century and International Women's Day has been celebrated annually by then. The movement started by women-led marches, strikes and other protests since 1909, followed by Women's Day observance on the same year in New York. The International Women's Day then was observed in 1911 in some countries in Europe in which the issue of the rights to vote and holding public office was raised as well as a form of protest against employment sex discrimination.

The demonstration happened in Saint Petersburg initiated the February Revolution in 1914. Russian women went on strike to demand the end of World War I and the end to food shortages. The strike was followed by October Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union and by then an official day was celebrated in communist and socialist countries. In the West, International Women's Day was first observed after 1977 when UN General Assembly invited member states to proclaim 8 March as the UN Day for women's rights and world peace."

A perceived channel to easily surmount gender inequality is women empowerment (FAO, 2012). The conceptualization of empowerment varies widely. Consequently, Mehra (1997) cautions that effort must be made to ensure the definition of empowerment is quantified according to specific contexts. Literature shows that many scholars accentuate 'agency' as an essential element of empowerment, although they use different terms. Kabeer, (2001); Abu-Lughod, (2009); Schuler & Ife Psychologia (2017). Efforts to define empowerment are often faced with many challenges as there are often contradicting general set of indicators. Consequently, Santillan, *et al.* (2004) observe that: Although general 'domains' or 'dimensions' developed in one setting may be transferable to another, specific indicators will need to be developed in any given setting, taking into account the purpose for which they are to be used. Deriving from the growing focus on women's empowerment, there has been a corresponding rising body of literature attempting to define the concept.



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Definition of empowerment in broad terms is often situated within two concepts – process and agency. With respect to women empowerment, empowerment as a process is seen as the development of policies and programmes that will enable girls and women to challenge current norms and change conditions. Mehra, (1997) also notes that 'the definition of empowerment should include the expansion of choices for women and an increase in women's ability to exercise choice. 'Kabeer, (2001) defines empowerment as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". The position of Malhotra, *et al*(1995)concurs with the definition by emphasizing that the definition highlights a transition from relative powerlessness to greater equity in the exercise of power and as such differentiate "empowerment" from the general concept of "power", as espoused by dominant individuals or groups. They argue further that to be considered 'empowered', women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change. That is, women must engage in agency. For example, health and development strategies may support or enable women's empowerment, but they cannot provide empowerment as if they were health services or commodities themselves. Said Santillan, *et al*. (2004).

*a) Empowering women: some lessons from the literature*

Women hold the key to a future free from hunger and poverty. By supporting women's education, training them as business leaders, equipping them to become better farmers and aiding those displaced by conflict, the Women's Empowerment Fund is giving WFP and its supporters a new way to help them do that.

As mothers, farmers, teachers and entrepreneurs, a great deal hinges on their success. Evidence shows that with equal access to education, training and means, women can raise the living standards of their families and inject new life into the local economy.

Evidence shows that women in Africa re-invest about 90 percent of their income back into their households compared to between 30 and 40 percent for men. Giving women the knowledge and skills they need to run successful farms and businesses is an efficient way to strengthen poor families.

Women produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food in most developing countries, despite having less access to land and credit than men do. Providing them with the tools and training they need to raise quality and yields is one of the best ways to increase food production in countries prone to hunger.

Women are particularly vulnerable in times of conflict, even as their role as providers becomes more important than ever. Easing their return home by giving them the tools and training they need to rebuild can kick-start the recovery process for an entire community. Two thirds or the approximately 75 million children denied educations around the world are girls. Yet studies show that educated women have healthier children, who are more likely to live longer and attend schools themselves. Educating women is thus an important first step towards beating poverty and hunger. The following are some empowerment activities that can build self-esteem in young women and girls.

*b) Women participation in polities*

In most societies, women have little to no say on the issues affecting them, such as governance, allocation of resources, marriage, childbearing, etc. Right from the family level, women should be participants in the decision-making process. Of all the activities for women's empowerment, providing a path to leadership is the most instrumental. It does not only instill confidence but also puts women at a level where they can be able to empower other women. In a male-dominated society, affirmative action is the only way to help women to achieve leadership roles.

Empowering girls and young women is not an 'option' for a modern society it should have already happened a long time ago. The following are some ways we can all help empower young women and girls to be the best that they can be.

UNDP supports gender responsiveness of political institutions and facilitates women's access to opportunities and skills to exercise their political rights, participate in decision-making, exercise leadership, and contribute to development processes. UNDP does this by:

- Supporting women's coalitions in political parties and representative bodies.
- Encouraging political parties to: (i) remove all barriers to the participation of women, (ii) develop their capacity to analyze issues from a gender perspective, and (iii) adopt policies and/or quotas to promote women's participation at all levels of decision-making;
- Promoting coalition building and networking among women representatives and decision-makers;
- Supporting gender mainstreaming in parliaments through induction training for MPs on gender issues, mainstreaming gender impact reviews into parliamentary committee work, gender analysis of proposed laws, gender-sensitive budgeting, support for cross-party women's caucuses, and women's mentoring programs.

UNDP collaborates with women's networks and academia; and works closely with its sister agencies including UN Women, DPA, OHCHR, UNICEF; and inter governmental organizations such as OSCE/ODIHR; and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on women's political participation, including IDEA, USIP and *Interpeace*, as well as regional and national CSOs.

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## III. Methodology

Since the 1970s, several studies have focused on the analysis of effects of finance on the empowerment of women, notably in developing countries. In Africa particularly, the studies carried out in this manner focused on Cameroun, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Benin, etc. (Dahoun et al., 2013; Ganle et al., 2015). In order to properly appreciate the influence of credit on the development of women owned business in Cameroon, this study has adopted a binary model approach, given the type of data used, in order to take into account the effect of credit on the profits of women owned enterprises. Using the ECAM 4 database, we filter information on women in the Extreme region and particularly in the Diamaré department. From this operation we obtained a sample of 1140 individuals. We selected the variables that would allow us to carry out the modeling. This variable part has been summarized in the table below for a better understanding and to show the used variables of the research work.

*Table 1:* Summary of variables

| Variables | Etiquette | Modalities | Awaitedsign |
|---|---|---|---|
| SPC | Socio Professional Catégories | 1-Employer<br>0-Employee | |
| Microfinance | Access to the services of Microfinance | 1-Yes<br>0-No | +/- |
| Association | Belonging to an association | 1-Yes<br>0-No | +/- |
| ONG | support of NGO | 1Yes<br>0-No | +/- |
| NIVINS1 | Education level of respondant | 0-No schhol<br>1-Primary<br>2-Secondary<br>3-University | +/- |
| FORIN | Sectorofactivities | 1-Formal<br>0-Informal | +/- |

With the information contained in the table above, we can estimate the two models of this paper.

## IV. Results

In this last part of the paper we present the results of the different analyses.

*a) Presentation of the variables of women entrepreneurship*

*Table 2:* Variables of women entrepreneurship

| SPC | Dependant variable of women entrepreneurship | |
|---|---|---|
| | Odds ratio | Standard error |
| Microfinance | 2.77** | 0.13 |
| NIVINS1 | 1.43*** | 0.18 |
| ONG | 3.90 | 0.37 |
| FORIN | 2.93 | 0.34 |
| Constante | 0.27*** | 0.08 |
| Number of obs = 1140 | LR chi$^2$(4) = 11.23 | Prob> chi2 = 0.0241 |
| Log likelihood = -784.57255 | Pseudo R2 = 0.2071 | |

*Note: *** (**) (*) significative à 1% ; 5% ; 10%*
****= P<0.01; **= P<0.05; *=P<0.10.*

According to the information in the table suggests that the binary logistic regression model is robust in its ability to explain women's self-employment in the region. Indeed the interpretation of Prob> chi2 returns the information according to which, the model is significant at a threshold of 5%, as well as by the significance of the model. The interpretation of the pseudo $R^2$ gives the information that the explanatory power of the model is 20.71%; thus, the model accounts for 20.71% of the fact that women can be self employed in our study population. According to Mushumbusi and Jan (2013), shows that members of MFIs indicated that



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they were able to make different contribution to their household and community, and they felt self-worth and that woman should have equal rights to men. Women are more empowered due to contribution they make in their households. This further indicates that women self-perception and perception from others have positively changed compared to before they were members of MFIs but that is not the case in the Diamare Division because the women are still lacking behind maybe it is due to the culture and religion which states that women must always be at home and their husband provide for them.

After interpreting the ability of the model to explain the phenomenon so it is the subject, it is the question of being able to look at the determinants to explain the fact that women can be in situation of self-employment. The interpretation of the model suggests the existence of significant variables in the binary logistic regression model. The variable "Microfinance" is one of the significant variables of the model, its interpretation returns the information that this variable by its odds ratio of 2.77 > 1 has a high probability of being able to positively influence the self-employment of women in the locality. Study Similar results have been found by Kabeer (1999), Khamar (2016) for which access to financial services allows women to escape poverty but also to support themselves. Majority of respondents' members of MFIs indicated they could interact freely and talk directly and with confidence with different people in the community on their ability to manage alone have increased.

The level of education as the previous variables significantly explains women's self-employment; the interpretation of the Odds Ratio suggests that the latter increases the probability of women being able to take charge of themselves, in fact the higher the level of study, and the more women, through the knowledge acquired during their schooling, are able to be able to better analyze and interpret the information coming from their environment and mainly from the market. Several authors like Kabeer (1999), Kharmar (2016), Anh, (2018) in their work demonstrates the importance of this variable In the explanation of women's empowerment, according to their different studies, a woman with a high academic level is better able to master her environment but also to be able to ensure good management of their small businesses. Similar results were obtained by Anh, (2018), who, looking at the impact of microfinance on women's self-employment in Vietnam, developed a binary logistic regression model to highlight the determinants of self-employment of women he notes that, membership of an association by a woman allows the latter to significantly increase its capacity to support However, the non-significance of the variable "NGO" is noticeable, the ODDSRATIO interpretation of this variable suggests that it will be able to improve women's self-employment, but this is not significant in this research and we also have the sector of activities which is 2.93>1 on how the relationship between Microfinance and sector of activity can empowered the women in our society. One interesting remark from the estimation is that married women appear to be less empowered in all dimensions compared to the rest (ie. those who are divorced, widowed, or single).

The odds ratio is especially very significant (p-value is <0.2021) and its estimate of 0.3 indicates that married women are 70% less likely to be empowered than the comparison group. It seems that marital status has the most negative impact on household decision-making dimension It can be seen that for those who are divorced, widowed, or single, most of them (80%) are reported to be the family's principal decision makers. Also, all divorced women are remarkably believed to be the household's leader, which suggests that if there is an absence of the husband, these women are assumed to lead their family without channeling this role to their sons (if applicable) or to their male relatives..

As Goetz & Gupta (1996) has shown, if there is an absence of a husband, women are still subject to the supervision of their male relatives who would be therefore responsible for the allocation of household's resources and the finalization of family's decisions are reported to be the major decision makers. But the case of the Far North, this could be due to the possibility that single women tend to be young, and thus they are still living with their parents who are leading the family at that moment.

*b) Presentation of dependent variable of women political participation*

*Table 3:* Variables of Political Participation

| SPC | Dependant variable of women political participation | |
|---|---|---|
| | Odds ratio | Standard error |
| Association | 2.29** | 2.64 |
| NIVINS1 | 1.76 | 0.13 |
| ONG | 3.90*** | 1.15 |
| FORIN | 2.93** | 1.39 |
| Constante | 0.27*** | 0.08 |

*Note: *** (**) (*) significative à 1% ; 5% ; 10%*
****= P<0.01;**= P<0.05;*=P<0.10.*

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The second significant variable in the model is membership in an association. Its interpretation suggests that belonging to an association can significantly increase women's ability to self-employ. This can be explained by the fact that, membership in an association allows women to share their experiences and benefit from the advice of each other, but also to be able to save and contributions allowing them to be in solidarity.

The information on the dependent variable table suggests that the binary logistic regression model is robust in its ability to explain women's self-employment in the region. Indeed the interpretation of Prob> chi2 returns the information according to which, the model is significant at a threshold of 5%, as well as by the significance of the model. The interpretation of the pseudo $R^2$ gives the information that the explanatory power of the model is 32.90%; thus, the model accounts for 32.90% of the fact that women can be self employed in our study population and odds ratio value of 2.29. which means that the second hypothesis is been validated. After interpreting the ability of the model to explain the phenomenon so it is the subject, it is the question of being able to look at the determinants to explain the fact that women can be in situation of self-employment.

The hypotheses of our research work which is Microfinance has strong effects on the promotion of women entrepreneurship and Microfinance has no effects on the promotion women political participation has been justify which show that the hypotheses are true. Accordingly, the meaningful participation of women in national, local and community leadership roles has become an important focus on global development policy. Still, some may ask why it matters if women become political leaders, elected policymakers, or civil society activists. Why does the world need more women involved in all aspects of the political process? Women's political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and a more sustainable future.

## V. Conclusion

Microfinance has been hailed as a veritable tool for the socio-economic growth of less developed economies in the past five years. The role of these institutions has been said to encompass wide range of the economic life. In this direction therefore, its ability to ensure socio-economic equity is through its activities to the less reached by the mainstream financial services has come to be a veritable anchor for the emphasis of these institutions in developing economics where the perception and opinion of MFI in Cameroon tend to be positive on the whole it is generally believed that MFIs is a force greatly aids in the development of the country and in the alleviation of poverty this generally held positive perception without a doubt has aided in the rapid growth in shows the effects size and in number of MFI institutions experienced since the early 1990s. The research paper examines the effects of MFI participation and membership duration on the degree of women's empowerment with a case study in Cameroon.

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