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Impact of Adult Education Programmes on Women Participation in Community Development in Omuma Local Government Area of Rivers State

Nkeiru Nwanorue [α] & Dr. Doreen Kobani [σ]

Abstract- This study investigated the impact of adult education programmes on women participation in community development in Omuma Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study was guided by three research objectives and three research questions. The study adopted analytical survey design. The population of this study comprised 766 women who participated in adult education programmes in the area of study, out of which 581 women were proportionately sampled. Instrument used for this study was a validated questionnaire titled "Impact of Adult Education Programmes on Women Participation in Community Development Questionnaire', and it has a reliability index of 0.86 which was considered reliable for the study. Mean statistics and t-test were used for analysing the data. Findings of the study revealed that basic literacy education progrmme has empowered women with requisite knowledge to participate in decision making; functional literacy programme has enhanced women economic life; and skill acquisition programmes has improved the economic status of women, all these programmes have improve women capability to participate in community development. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that to sustain women's participation in community development, that empowerment gotten from women empowerment education programmes should be sustained and improve upon through relevant follow-up adult educational programmes.

Keywords: adult education, adult education programmes, participation, community and community development.

I. Introduction

In Nigeria, women are affected by laws of the past, which discriminate against them in participating in the community development process; those in the rural areas are mostly affected by laws imposed on them by their homelands (culture) and those imposed by their local leaders. Through these laws, women are relegated into a lesser position that determines their status in all ramifications. Women in rural areas are traditionally low in status; most of them are deprived education by their own parents, just because they were females; some who manage to attend school, dropped out of school before acquiring adequate education that would have empowered them to enter into skilled labour, and consequently improve their socio-economic status. Not only that women education in the past is given little attention in most rural areas in Nigeria, the status of women has been conceived as inferior to that of their male counterparts, which eventually denied them many socio-economic development opportunities, thereby making them vulnerable to male dominance and also reduce their participatory power to community development. Women in this category needed to be empowered to stand out to defend themselves and participate in the development of their community.

Woman's empowerment according to Allahdadi (2011) means having the required ability to perform a several tasks individually or collectively. These processes that help women to acquire more resources and control their lives would cause them to feel more independent and self-confident, which, in turn, leads to an increase in their self-best (Barghi and Ghanbari, 2014). Oyebamiji (2011) defined empowerment as a process of enabling people to perform or act. He further explained that empowerment is the act of given local peoples the necessary skills, tools, resources and legal backing to perform. While Tengkand in Tremblay (2013) rightly pointed out that empowerment befell not only being a distinguishing feature of a person to be achieved, but also as a process, approach or method connected to ardent desires such as awareness-raising, knowledge, self-government and self-esteem. However, for women to bridge the gap created between them and active participation in community development, they need to be empowered. Empowered women according to Shahnaj and Ingrid-Ute (2012) will contribute to household income, have access to resources, ownership of assets, and participate in household decision-making (PHDM). Thus, women empowerment is the key to their active participation in community development.

Participation in community development perspective is how people and communities cooperate and collaborate in development projects and programmes. Onyeozu (2007) further maintained that participation is all about the channeling of individual actions into collective forms; where stress is laid on mutual aid and the building of collaborative relationship and cooperation. In view of this, Anyanwu in Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) asserted that the promotional values of citizen participation are that participation:

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1. Enhance faith in the possibility of success in the execution of programmes designed for better living;
2. Promote faith in the ultimate satisfaction of personal and community motives;
3. Measure faith in the integrity of authority and it evokes faith on the superiority of community, purpose, advanced by the personal aim of individual citizens.

Thus, they asserted that the elements of participation in community development progammes include, discussion, planning, mobilization, consolidation and evaluation, this agrees with Onyeozu (2007) observations of what participation in community development is concerned with. which include the involvement of people in co-operate projects for the improvement of their living conditions; activities for acquisition of skills that enable them adjust to changing realities; and the involvement of people in public issues which grow out of individual or local interest. Women's participation in community development will accord them the opportunity to contribute to the growth of their communities. Participation and involvement in economic development projects in the community is recognised as a poverty reduction intervention in both low-income and high-income countries (Salt, 2010). Schurmann and Johnston (2009) observe that participation in community-based development projects improves women's socioeconomic status, raises their self-esteem, and ensures their wellbeing within the household while Meade (2010) state that women's participation increases their family conflict leading to their vulnerability to marital violence since it threatens men's traditional patriarchal family authority.

Factors that affect women participation in community development can be classified under pull and push factors. Pull factors are those elements that enable or encourage women's participation while push factors are those elements that hinder women's participation. For instance, created and invited spaces like meetings, leadership positions and organisation rules can provide opportunities for women participation in development activities at the same time, power differences on the other hand, can limit women's ability to participate in decision making and their attendance in project work. Participation is an essential component of community development because without participation in any community development effort, such efforts cannot be regarded as community development programme or project. It is on this ground that Sahed and Nobaya (2010) identified the following as relationship that exist between community development and participation:

1. *Result:* Through participation, community member are benefited.
2. *Awareness:* Through participation, people gain awareness of the problem and possible solutions to them.
3. *Confidence:* Through participation, people gain confidence and self-esteem, acquire new skills, and greater satisfaction for improved quality of life.
4. *Find Out Own Potential:* Through participation, those who are involved sometimes realizes their own potential and begins to contribute to decision making in their community.
5. *Planning:* Through participation, people who are in involve are offered new opportunities for creative thinking and innovative planning and development.
6. *Effectiveness:* Through participation, people gain skills of effective and efficient. In line with this, Arora (1999) established that through participation, efficiency, effectiveness and equity in development process are promoted. Hence involving community members in decision making for community development lead to better decision being made, and that this is a more appropriate because it promotes sustainability of projects or programmes.

The relationship that exists between participation and community development is also discussed by Osuji in Oyebamiji, and Adelola (2008) as element of participation to community development. These according to him are community members taking part in:

1. Decision making to identified needs;
2. The mobilization of resources and planning of projects to be undertaken;
3. Activities to implement and put projects in the place; and
4. Monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Due to the peculiarity of women status in most African society, their level of participation in community development is now and they need to be empowered through adult education programme which will the women folk with knowledge, skills, and capability expected to expand their ability to participate in different community development programmes. some of the adult education programmes provided for women empowerment include women literacy education and skill acquisition programmes

Women Literacy empowerment programmes are important to all societies because they are mothers who are the first educators to children, who will grow up to be future leaders of any country, Okpoko (2010) supported this view by contending that education of women is critical to development, and make them invaluable assets to their families, communities, nation and the entire world. Implicitly, literacy education spurs critical thinking among women towards proper decision

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making in her environment and the society at large. Also, through literacy women are equipped with skills for economic, political and social development. In support of this, (Anyanwu, Omolewa and Sidique in Okpoko (2010) affirm that without literacy, the society cannot acquire the useful information required for stability and pleasure in their environment. It is based on this notion that literacy is said to be a human right in UNESCO (2014). Thus, it is a right to womanhood as well, and every woman no matter her status in the society is entitled to right to be literate. Literacy is expected to cultivate in people, the attitudes, skills, behaviours and abilities needed for their effectiveness in the society. Women through literacy acquire consciousness of:

1. Freedom from age-long taboos and superstitions that keep them at the background.
2. Freedom from ignorance and associated poverty.
3. Right thinking for decision making.
4. Empowerment skills for improve living standards.
5. Recognition in the society.

To Asaolu (2010), when we want to empower women through literacy, vocational education must be part of the content of such literacy education designed for women. Vocational education as rightly observed by Asaolu (2010), will set women on the part of self-reliance and also on a platform in which they will be able to partake in decision making. In accordance with this assertion, Ogwu (2010) contend that women, who are important members of families of the world, should be given literacy and not to be allowed to waste their endowed potentials. However, literacy education will play a crucial role in:

1. Promoting the development of instrumental knowledge (reading, writing and arithmetic) and skills for women to participate in needs identification in their community.
2. Changing of attitude of women toward issues that concern the development of their community.
3. Developing in the women, the capability to participate in decision-making in development and maintenance of simplified accounts management of income meant for any community development project; and raising awareness of their roles towards the development of their community and the need for them to be involved fully in the process.

Through literacy education, women are trained to become active in political, economic and social life and they are able to increase their levels of awareness for enhanced ability to lay claim on their rights. Skill acquisition programmes are programmes designed for improving women economic status by equipping them with relevant developmental skills. These programmes include, tailoring, bead making, hat weaving, fashion and design, catering, and so on. It is worthy of note that the present government administration governor of Rivers State, Chief (Barr.) Ezenwo Nyesom Wike in his new vision blue print made obvious provision for empowering Rivers indigenous women as well as women resident in the state through concrete initiative to build strong families and play key roles in developing the state.

In Omuma Local Government Area, women have advanced from mere producers of food at subsistence level to key players in the development of their community due to the benefits they derived from different government adult education programmes for the empowerment of women such as basic literacy programme, functional literacy programme, skill acquisition proigramme, cultural education programme, and so on. Women in Omuma LGA have been playing critical roles which include organizing themselves and taking responsibilities on how to manage their community needs/problems but their efforts are hampered mostly by their un-empowered status which includes cultural barriers, illiteracy and limited access to political network. The identified factors, among others have contributed to the slow pace of women participation in community development in Omuma Local Government Area, in order to liberate women from the identified position above, successive governments in Rivers State and some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) made concerted efforts towards provision of different education empowerment programmes such as women literacy, civic literacy, functional literacy programmes, and so on to brigde the gap that have been impeding women from participating in community development. Specifically, these programmes were meant to improve women status and empower them to actively participate in the community development programmes in their communities. However, this study is been carried out to find out the extent to which these adult education programmes have or have not improve women participation in community development in the area of study.

II. Statement of the Problem

Women in Omuma Local Government Area are naturally endowed with willingness and ability to participate in things that will promote the development of their community and they have been trying their best in a very limited way by participating in community development but are constrained by some socio and economic factors that have been hindering their full participation In recognition of the plight of women in these localities and their ever ready willingness to do something tangible for the development of their community, government and non-governmental organisations designed different adult education programmes to improve the lives of women in Omuma local government area and also break down social and economic constraints that prevents women from taking

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active participation in community development. Since the introduction of the adult education programmes, women have benefited from these adult programmes and this prompted the researcher to investigate the impact of the adult education programmes on the beneficiaries. Therefore, the question now is to what extent have these programme impacted on the lives of the beneficiaries to enable them participate in community development in the various communities in Omuma local government area? To answer this question is the problem of this study.

III. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of adult education programmes on women participation in community development in Omuma Local Government Area of Rivers State. Based on this purpose, the specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the extent to which basic literacy education has empowered women with requisite knowledge to participate in decision making for community development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent to which functional literacy education programme has enhanced women economic life to participate in community development in Omuma Local Government Areas.
3. Examine the extent to which skills acquired in women skill acquisition programmes has improved the economic status of women and enable them to participate in community development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State.

IV. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. To what extent has basic literacy education programme empowered women with requisite knowledge to participate in decision making for community development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State?.
2. To what extent has functional literacy education programme enhanced women economic life to participate in community development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State?.
3. To what extent has skills acquired in women skill acquisition programmes improved the economic status of women and enable them to participate in community development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State?.

V. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. The study area was Omuma Local Government Area in Rivers State. The population of this study comprised 766 women who participated in five Rivers State women empowerment programmes in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers state. Out of which, 581 women were proportionately sampled. The instrument used for this study was a validated 20 items structured questionnaire titled 'Impact of Empowerment Education Programmes on Women Participation in Community Development Questionnaire' (IEEPWPCDQ), designed by the researcher, with a reliability index of 0.86.

The administration of the instrument was done by the researcher with the help of two trained research Assistants Out of 581 copies of questionnaire distributed, 535 was retrieved as dully filled and used for the analysis. The data obtained from the field work was analysed with mean statistics for research question and t-test statistics for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used for decision taking on the items in the questionnaire. Means above 2.5 was accepted as positive while those below 2.5 were rejected as negative.

VI. Result

Research Question One: To what extent has basic literacy empowered women with requisite knowledge to participate in decision making for community development in Omuma Local Government Area, Rivers State?.

Table 4.1: Mean Analysis of Extent to Which Basic Literacy Has Empowered Women with Requisite Knowledge to Participate in Decision Making for Community Development

S/N	Statements	Omuma N=536		Decision
		X	SD	
1	I can now contribute to decision on needs identification for community development project in my community	3.38	0.959	High Extent
2	I can now participate in needs assessment for community development in your community	3.34	0.959	High Extent
3	Women are more empowered to partake in decisions concerning type of community development programme in my community	3.29	0.988	High Extent
4	I can read and write properly and this has empowered me to be secretary in meeting of community development in my community	3.39	0.644	High Extent
5	I can now contribute to decision on types of community development project in my community	3.28	0.994	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.34		High Extent

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The result from table 4.1 shows that mean values of respondents on items 1-5 ranges from 3.28-3.38. The mean responses are all greater than the criterion mean value of 2.50, and this implies that basic literacy education have empowered women with requisite knowledge to participate in decision making for community development in Omuma Local Government Areas, Rivers State. Analysis on research question one gave a grand mean of 3.34 implies that respondents were of the view that women in the LGAs to a high extent now contribute to decision on types of community development project; participate in needs assessment for community development; to partake in decisions concerning type of community development; act as secretaries in meeting of community development; and contribute to decision on types of community development project

Research Question Two: To what extent has functional literacy programme enhanced women economic life to participate in community development in OmumaLocal Government Areas?.

Table 4.2: Mean Analysis of Extent to Which Functional Literacy Programme has Enhanced Women Economic Life to Participate in Community Development

S/N	Statements	Omuma N=536 X	SD	Decision
6	Through the financial empowerment I got from the financial literacy prgramme, I now know better how to accumulate wealth to be able to participate in resource mobilsation for community development in my community	3.08	0.7628	High Extent
7	Women are no longer dependent on their husband for money to pursue community development issue	3.04	0.5571	High Extent
8	I earn more money now due to empowerment form the functional literacy education I	3.12	0.914	High Extent
9	Women in my community are doing well in their vocation due to empowerment they got from the functional literacy programme they enrolled in	3.14	0.910	High Extent
10	I can now differentiate between priority community needs for community development and other needs that are not community development driven	3.15	0.911	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.10	0.811	High Extent

Table 4.2 revealed that the mean values of respondent responses for items 6-10 ranges from 3.04-3.15 and a grand mean values of 3.10 which are all greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 and imply that functional literacy programme to an extent have enhanced women economic life to participate in community development in Omuma Local Government Area. Women who participated in the functional literacy programme to a high extent have gained knowledge and skills for financial empowerment; on how to pursue community development issue; to earn more money and less dependent on their husband for money toward contribution for community development; that have enable them to be doing well in their vocation; and that enables them to differentiate between priority community needs for community development and other needs that are not community development driven.

Research Question Three: To what extent has skills acquired in women skill acquisition programmes improved the economic status of women and enable them to participate in community development in Omuma and Etche Local Government Areas?.

Table 4.3: Mean Analysis of Extent Skills Acquired in Women Skill Acquisition Programmes has Improved the Economic Status of Women and Enable them to Participate in Community Development

S/N	Statements	Omuma N=536 X	SD	Etche N=513 X	SD	Decision
11	I am now an employer of labour due to the skill and empowerment I got from the skill acquisition programme	2.72	0.836	2.69	0.909	High Extent
12	Women in my community pay their monetary contributions to community development regularly due to economic empowerment from the skills acquisition programme	2.63	0.968	2.80	0.843	High Extent
13	I contribute to resources mobilsation for community deelopment regularly due to my level of financial empowerment	2.68	0.904	2.86	0.814	High Extent
14	I now have the ability to contribute to provision of fund for buying equipment for community development	2.71	0.972	2.74	0.883	High Extent
15	Women in my community are now participationg in the provision of community development projects	2.70	0.908	2.74	0.925	High Extent
	Grand Mean	2.69	0.918	2.77	0.875	High Extent

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Table 4.3 revealed that the mean values of respondent responses for item 11-15 ranges from 2.91-3.01 from respondents of Omuma LGA. The grand mean values of responent responses on question two gave a mean value of 2.69 which is also greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 and implies that respondents were of the opinion that skill acquisition programmes have improved the economic status of women and enable them to participate in community development in Omuma Local Government Area by enabling them to regularly to pay their monetary contributions to community development regularly; contribute to resources mobilsation for community development; provision of fund for buying equipment for community development; participate in the provision of community development projects; and making them employer of labour

VII. Discussions of Findings

Basic literacy education has empowered women with requisite knowledge to contribute to decision on types of community development project, programmes and needs assessment exercise and so on, for community development. This finding is in accordance with Adekola and Kumbe (2016) finding which established that women education (literacy and vocational) have positive effects on participation of women in need identification, planning, resource mobilization for community development, implementation and utilization of community development projects. Adelore and Olomukoro (2015) also affirmed that literacy empowers and it is the most essential of all educational skills.

The findings also revealed that functional literacy programme has enhanced women economic life to participate in community development. Education, formal or non-formal, is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of women status. This is in support of Oyitso and Olomukoro (2014) observation that education of women had made ineffective the traditional belief that the place of the woman is the home. We have also seen that in this jet age, women have been a force to reckon with in the political and socio-economic life of the nation. The role of women has gone beyond the four walls of their home and extends to all spheres of human endeavours in the development of the nation.

Economic status of women has improved due to the benefits of Skill acquisition programmes they experienced. According to Laoye in Olomukoro (2012), empowerment, is a training process through which participants acquire skills in some vocational activities, decision-making, literacy, and effective participation in governance. Empowering women will equip them with the much-needed skills and provide them access to information and services to build capacity. In view of this Adelore and Olomukoro (2015) established that women education centres where women acquire skills in different vocational activities, such as dressmaking, knitting, embroidery, soap making, and catering, empowered them to meet their domestic and public obligations. In addition, Egbo (2000) reported that literate women in Nigeria for example, reported confident enough to participate in community meetings, unlike illiterate women. Literate women have been known to contribute to the political stability and peace of a country.

VIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study established that adult educational programmes helped to enhance women capabilities toward participation in community through provision of knowledge and skills for improved social and economic status.

IX. Recommendations

The researcher recommended that:

1. In order to sustain women participation in decision making, that empowerment derived from basic literacy education programme should be sustained and improved upon through relevant follow up educational programme;
2. Subsequent functional literacy programmes should be inclusive to cover women socio-economic life and
3. Skill acquisition programmes should be sustained through innovative measures.

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