



ROLES OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN EZINIHITE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA

Irene Enyioma Okezie¹, Doreen Kobani, PhD²

¹Rivers State University, Nkpolu -Oroworukwo, P.M.B.5080

²Faculty of Education, Department of Adult Education and Community Development

-----ABSTRACT-----

The study examined the Roles of Adult Education Programmes in the Socio-Economic Development of Women in Ezinihite Local Government Area of Imo State. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 255 respondents. This comprised 252 women from 8 women organizations in Ezinihite Local Government Area of Abia State and 3 adult education facilitators. The study was a census study as the entire population was studied due to its manageable size. Data for the study were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled 'Roles of Adult Education Programmes in Socio-Economic Development of Women Questionnaire (RAEPSEDWQ)'. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha method. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data collected to answer the research questions. The findings of the study showed that financial planning and investment education programmes improves the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihite Local Government Area of Imo State to a high extent. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that, Government and relevant stakeholders should organize workshops and seminars to educate women about investment opportunities and strategies for financial growth.

KEYWORDS: Adult Education, Adult Education Programmes, Socio-economic Development, Women-----

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian government has invested so much money in the education of her citizens. This is a commendable effort as education is an instrument par excellence in national development. No wonder, Okeke cited in Akande (2001) that education is a beneficial and indispensable investment in development as individuals who receive education can contribute to and consume the proceeds of development and this requires that their skills, knowledge and capabilities be developed. In line with the above view, Osuala cited in Nzeneri (2008) that the development of human resources should get precedence over natural resources for these people are both the procurers and beneficiaries of economic development. Unfortunately, illiteracy among people in developing nations, according to Anowor, Ezema and Umezulike (2003) has been identified as a major problem in realizing these dreams. One way of eliminating illiteracy among people is through adult education.

The concept of Adult Education which has wide acceptability, according to Fasokun (2006) is concerned not with preparing people for life, but rather with helping/assisting people (adults) to live more successfully as useful acceptable members of their societies and contribute meaningfully to the development of those societies. The Report of the First Congress on Comparative Study of Adult Education reported by Okedara (1981:12) defines Adult Education 'as a process whereby persons who no attend school on a regular and full-time basis programmes are especially designed for sequential and organized activities with the intention of bringing about changes in knowledge, undertakings or skills, and attitudes or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal and community problems'.

To Townsend-Coles in Kobani and Alozie (2016) was cited stating that Adult Education is all kinds of educative experiences needed by both men and women, according to their varied needs and requirements, at their differing levels of comprehension and abilities and their changing roles and responsibilities throughout life.



From the above definitions, adult education is meant to improve the individual and subsequently, the society in which the individual lives in. What the world is concerned with these days is education that is aimed at increasing the economic progress of the society and the kind of education that involves the use of science and technology in boosting the economic progress of the community. This is because economic well-being of the people requires well-trained and skilled personnel which adult education provides.

No society can be strong, if its economy remains at the subsistence level. Economic modernization cannot take place unless all the citizens are actively involved in the development process. Kobani and Alozie (2019) asserted that the inferior position assigned to women jeopardizes not only their future status in society but also the future of society itself. Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women. Ensuring that girls receive basic education is a sure way to give them more power over their lives.

The right of girls to education is a basic human right enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon (2010) in Kobani and Alozie (2019) stressed the transformative effect on both a family and the wider community when a woman is literate. He noted that every literate woman marks a victory over poverty and that literate women are more likely to send their children, especially their girls, to school. He also notes that by acquiring literacy, women become more economically self-reliant and more actively engaged in their country's social, political and cultural life. All evidence shows that investment in literacy for women yields high development dividends.

Adult education offers training that can help women improve on their skills and knowledge so that they can contribute effectively to the task of economic development. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) realized that for the objectives and aims of education to become a reality, a more functional approach needed to be taken. Maybe, that was why the Federal and State Governments in trying to achieve the nation's goals and aims in national building, established several adult education agencies and programmes.

If adult education is to contribute to development, it must be part of life, integrated with life and inseparable from it. In presenting his proposal for a new perspective for adult education in an address to the 1995 National Conference, the then Federal Minister of Education called for a Ten-Year plan for the eradication of illiteracy and ignorance among the adult citizens of the country. Although the federal government is taking positive steps to promote and ensure the success of the campaign on mass literacy for development through the Universal Basic Education (UBE), experience has shown that many state governments including Imo State Government has not established statutory Adult and Non-formal Education Agency for the effective coordination of adult education activities in the state.

While adult education may mean different things to different people and societies, surely it performs various essential roles in every society. It is largely because of the comprehensive and wide roles which adult education plays in the society which accounts for the variations in its perceptions and concepts (Amirize and Kobani, 2020). For Nzeneri (2008) adult education is any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problems, to enable them adjust to changes and challenges in their lives and society.

Adult Education also refers to those programmes of activities which can create better life for the rural dwellers. A practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfillment as a life long learner.

Education provides a woman with communicative, computational and occupational skills needed for her to participate in the social economic and cultural life in her community. It enables her to become a more effective, productive and responsible citizen in the community in which she lives (Kobani, (2014). Women's education, combined with employment programmes, coincided with declining population growth, lower child mortality, lower birth rates and better nutritional habits, others are, high living standard and general improvement of the quality of life within the family and rural communities. Development programmes are to take into account women's needs and involve them fully in planning and implementation.



Women's education gives women concrete action against negative widowhood practices. Education makes women to become economically independent and self-reliant. It makes women to control resources like land and properties and gives them a higher status in their husband's home especially for bringing additional income to the family (Kobani, 2021). Education creates the conditions for sustainable womanhood through equality and economic control.

Women's education makes women to know and understand themselves better through counselling, That is to know their problems, weakness and capabilities. Women are taught many strategies and they are to choose by themselves the best for the solution of their problems. Education encourages women to speak for themselves. Education qualifies women for promotion into higher levels of skill and responsibility in the occupational structure, It promotes the female well-being and provide women with techniques of social mobilization. Education makes a woman to be a successful wife, mother, worker and community leader, it makes her more useful to herself, her community and to the nation as a whole, (Kobani, 2021).

Women have now taken places in all our formal institutions of learning. Educated women have organised enlightenment programmes to enlighten Nigerian women on their roles in national development. Also workshops, seminars and conferences are organized to educate women on the means and ways of acquiring political and economic power. Adult Education classes are established in the rural areas.

There have been successful and innovative programmes such as using local Extension agents in rural areas or establishing flexible educational initiatives that fit with women's schedules. Other projects include day-care centres for women who otherwise could not have attended classes.

To empower a woman is to empower a larger population because women have a wider outreach by virtue of their quality of empathy (Kobani, 2021). As mothers, women know the pains of childbirth and upbringing of children, and marriage also brings women to wider contacts and exposure.

Empowerment is not confined to financial or economic advantages but refers more to equipping women with the vital resources necessary to make positive impacts in their environments. Such positive impacts would come about largely through proper and appropriate education of women according to their vital roles (Kobani, 2014).

According to Ezimah (2004) adult learning and education comprise the powerful ways to to move towards alleviating poverty, promoting peace and democracy, fostering inclusions, achieving environmental awareness and helping people to adapt to the social, economic and political advances.

Adult education can improve employability and income, which is a key pathway to realizing a range of other benefits. For instance, it enables people to some extent choose and shape the context in which they live and work and even increase their social status. Adult education is a very good way to help sustain and improve society. It is relatively low cost, and can easily be justified by its many benefits.

Adult education teaches women skills that support self sufficiency i.e courses like cooking, cloth-making, gardening, farming, natural health care, exercise for improved wellness. Various studies have noted that social economic development is equivalent to human capital resources development. It is in this light that Bombiat and Marcybiat (2017) noted that the knowledge, human activity and initiatives carried out by people formed the structural frame work of community development hence, the factors that defined social economic wellbeing and knowledge, human activity (social or economic) and the initiative of community members. Uyang, Akwaji and Ezikeudu (2015) described socio-economic well being as the improvement in literacy income and occupation. Orgwu (2021) stated that socio-economic well being in the following areas could be determined by the following factors, economic advancement, standard of living and the societal recognition or impact of rural dwellers.

Nnodim and Ochogba (2019) assert that socio-economic well being of rural dwellers is primarily dependent on agriculture because they can predominantly farmers relating to one another and making their living through marketing



of agricultural produce. Here, socio-economic wellbeing could be seen as the extent people participate in social and economic activities for the improvement of their social inter-relationship and standard of living.

The exigencies of change in human society, coupled with the increasing complexity of life today have clearly demonstrated that education must be a lifelong process. Adult Education occupies an honoured, but marginal position, a remedial additive or incentive to the main educational system concerned solely with the young and acted as a series of sieves for sifting them into categories suitable for future employment. Adult Education servers to mitigate the deprivation experienced by those who failed to secure more of the scarce and highly competitive free places or bursaries in post primary education which was normally the preserve of those whose families could afford to pay the fees. It gives the ordinary worker, in later life, a chance to share in the non-economic benefits of higher education. Thus, enable him to share in the depreciation of elite culture and to have some of intellectual and aesthetic experiences which the more fortunate had enjoyed at colleges and universities (Nzeneri, 2008).

Development is seen as the process by which man increases or maximizes his control and use of the material resources which nature has endowed him and his environment (Marthin 1991). According to him, development has six ingredients. These are: eliminating unemployment, poverty and inequality, Others are: increasing material wealth for the use of individuals and the modern collectivity known as a nation, availability of labour-saving devices, hence, the modern emphasis on science and technology and the provision of social amenities like education, good roads, healthcare, good drinking water, electricity, communication systems and viable economy.

The essence of adult education according to Nzeneri (2008) is to actualize development. Thus, adult education is all about individual and societal development. Development in the sense that, majority of our population live in the rural areas suffering from abject poverty, ignorance, disease and poor living standards. This category of people therefore, need to be changed for them to become better actors on matters affecting their lives. Thus, capacity building of persons who are physically and psychologically mature and are socially economically and politically responsible is what adult education is all about.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Adult education which is related to employment and income affects women's contribution to decision making. Today, all over the world, education is the key success to any meaningful endeavour. The roles of women in their homes and communities at large, cannot be overemphasized, it follows that, where there is responsibility or duty, there must be also an opportunity for people to make effective choices and decisions. Adult education programmes in this case become necessary in equipping women with functional education to be better "actors on matters concerning their lives. Therefore, the determination of the roles of adult education programmes to the socio-economic development of women in the study area, using empirical means, is the problem of this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were formulated to guide study:

1. To what extent does financial planning and investment education programmes improve the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State?
2. To what extent does vocational skills programmes improve the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 255 respondents. This comprised 252 women from 8 women organizations in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State and 3 adult education facilitators. The study was a census study as the entire population was studied due to its manageable size. Data for the study were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled 'Roles of Adult Education Programmes in Socio-Economic Development of Women Questionnaire'. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha method which gave reliability coefficients of 0.83, and 0.77 for the two clusters of the instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data collected for the study. Decision rule for the research questions were based on the classification of level of extent as shown below:



Classification	Value Range
Very High Extent (VHE) = 4	3.50 – 4.00
High Extent (HE) = 3	2.50- 3.49
Low Extent = 2	1.50- 2.49
Very Low Extent = 1	1.00- 1.49

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent does financial planning and investment education programmes improve the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State?

Table 1: Mean Scores of Responses on the Extent Financial Planning and Investment Education Programmes Improve the Socio-Economic Development of Women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State

S/N	Statement	Women N=252			Facilitators N=3		
		Mean	S.D	Decision	Mean	S.D	Decision
1	Through financial planning and investment education programmes, women are empowered to manage their resources, make informed decisions and achieve greater economic autonomy.	3.06	0.72	HE	3.00	0.60	HE
2	Learn how to invest in and manage businesses, leading to the growth of women-led enterprises and contributing to economic development.	3.09	0.69	HE	2.85	0.68	HE
3	Build assets, generate wealth and contribute to the overall economic growth of their communities	2.92	0.78	HE	2.97	0.69	HE
4	Educate them about retirement savings and investment strategies which prepares them for future financial security, reducing risk of poverty in old age.	3.19	0.58	HE	3.20	0.79	HE
Grand Mean		3.07		HE	3.01		HE

Table one illustrated above revealed that, respondents agreed that through financial planning and investment education programmes, women are empowered to manage their resources, make informed decisions and achieve greater economic autonomy, learn how to invest in and manage businesses, leading to the growth of women-led enterprises and contributing to economic development, build assets, generate wealth and contribute to the overall economic growth of their communities and educate them about retirement savings and investment strategies which prepares them for future financial security, reducing risk of poverty in old age. The findings of items 1, 2, 3, and 4, therefore confirmed that financial planning and investment education programmes to a high extent, improves the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does vocational skills programmes improve the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State.



Table 2: Mean Scores of Responses on the Extent vocational skills programmes improves the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State.

S/N	Statement	Women N=252			Facilitators N=3		
		Mean	S.D	Decision	Mean	S.D	Decision
5	By providing women with vocational skills, they gain independence which in turn empowers them to pursue better economic activities and have a voice in decision-making processes.	2.84	0.67	HE	2.83	0.67	HE
6	Women are equipped with practical skills needed to enter the workforce, increasing their employability and chances of getting a job.	2.93	0.69	HE	2.80	0.67	HE
7	Bridge the gender gap in the workforce, promoting more equality in employment opportunities and economic participation.	2.83	0.67	HE	2.85	0.68	HE
8	Improve women’s access to healthcare and more resilient communities.	3.13	0.76	HE	3.03	0.71	HE
	Grand Mean	2.93		HE	2.88		HE

Table 2 illustrated above revealed that, respondents agreed that by providing women with vocational skills, they gain independence which in turn empowers them to pursue better economic activities and have a voice in decision-making processes, women are equipped with practical skills needed to enter the workforce, increasing their employability and chances of getting a job, bridge the gender gap in the workforce, promoting more equality in employment opportunities and economic participation and improve women’s access to healthcare and more resilient communities. The findings of items 5, 6, 7, and 8, therefore confirmed that vocational skills programmes to a high extent improves the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of the first research question was to determine the degree to which financial planning and investment education programmes improve the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State. The findings from the analysis of the data on table 1 showed that respondents agreed that to a high extent, financial planning and investment education programmes improves the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State.

The second research question investigated the extent to which vocational skills programmes improve the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State. According to the findings presented in table 2, respondents said that to a high extent, vocational skills programmes improve the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State. This finding is in line with the one that was made by Bombiat and Marcybiat (2017) that Adult education teaches women skills that support self-sufficiency i.e courses like cooking, cloth making, gardening, farming, natural health care, and exercise for improved wellness. They noted that social economic development is equivalent to human capital resources development.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that adult education programmes (financial planning and investment education programmes and vocational skills programmes) play a role in improving the socio-economic development of women in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State to a high extent.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and relevant stakeholders, situated in rural communities should organize workshops and seminars to educate women about investment opportunities and strategies for financial growth.
2. Relevant stakeholders should collaborate with local businesses to offer apprenticeship programmes for women to gain practical experience in their chosen vocational field.

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