

Original Article

UTILIZING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF RURAL WOMEN IN ENUGU STATE

Obodo, C.C and Nwoye, A.V
(Ph.D)

Department Of Continuing Education
and Development Studies, Faculty Of
Education, Enugu State University Of
Science And Technology, (Esut),
Enugu, Nigeria

E-mail: charlemeka@gmail.com,
Adaobi.nwoye@esut.edu.ng

Phone Number: 07033529366,
07036782612

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17019692>

Abstract

Lifelong learning is the concept that learning should be passionate quest and continuous process throughout one's life notwithstanding the stage and environment it takes place. This study investigated the utilization of community development programme to promote economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State. One research question and two hypotheses guided the study. The design of the study was descriptive survey. Instrument for data collection was a researchers' self-structured questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research questions. 396 rural women were selected and used for the study. The findings of the study include that: rural women had high extent on utilization of community development. This implies that rural women believe to a high extent that community development greatly promote the economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State. In view of these, the following recommendation were made among others, given that community development programmes gives rural women opportunity to adapt to the changing societal and economic demands, it then beckons on rural women to seek more continuous learning to enhance their economic well-being especially when it is provided within their communities.

Keywords: *Community Development, Economic well-being and Rural women*

Introduction

Lifelong learning for women is a topic that has gained significant attention in recent years because it is an ongoing process of acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies throughout a person's life beyond formal education. In affirmation to the above statement, Sundharavadivel and William (2018)

point that lifelong learning increases incomes of women, cognitive ability for quality of their life, closes the gender gap in education, increases decision making ability of women, empowers and reduces domestic violence, increases political participation of women, among others. Juan (2016) emphasized that lifelong learning is essential because it helps to develop the autonomy and sense

of responsibility of people and communities, to reinforce the capacity to deal with the transformations taking place in the economy, in culture and in society, to promote co-existence and to tolerate informed and creative participation of citizens in their communities. Furthermore, Ewelum, Ezeh and Ogbunugwor (2019) affirmed that lifelong learning increases the wages and equitable distribution of wealth of women in society, give women information that will financially empower them towards poverty alleviation, increases their productive potentials, economic capacity and improves women's role as home builders.

The foregoing implies that lifelong learning influences economic wellbeing of women. It can provide them a platform to connect with other individuals, share experiences, and build supportive networks. This social interaction can help combat isolation and empower rural women to actively engage in community development initiatives and there are several lifelong learning opportunities that can have a positive impact on the socio economic well-being of rural women. Therefore, Oneoma (2020) confirmed that economic well-being of women, encourages self-reliance and entrepreneurship, and helps families' builds better lives. This means that acquiring new knowledge, skills, and competencies through continuous learning, rural women can enhance their employability, income potential, and overall economic empowerment.

Adults whether male or female need financial independent to access the basic needs, as well as accomplish his or her personal objectives in life. This can be attained when one is economically established and gainfully employed or skillful. Economic well-being according to Orlukwu (2019) refers to the overall financial health and prosperity of individuals, households, or communities. It encompasses various factors such as income levels, employment opportunities, access to basic necessities, wealth accumulation, and overall

standard of living. Economic well-being is not solely determined by the amount of money one possesses but also by the ability to meet basic needs, achieve financial security, and pursue opportunities for economic advancement. Thus, economic well-being reflects the extent to which individuals can effectively manage their financial resources, support their desired lifestyle, and plan for future financial goals. It is influenced by factors such as economic stability, job security, access to education and healthcare, social support systems, and overall economic conditions within a given society. Ultimately, economic well-being is a multidimensional concept that goes beyond monetary wealth to encompass the overall economic health and resilience of individuals and communities. Therefore, economic well-being and empowerment of rural women can help these women stay abreast of market trends, technological advancements, and entrepreneurial opportunities, enabling them to adapt to changing economic conditions and seize new prospects for growth. By investing in lifelong learning initiatives for rural women, communities can promote gender equality, economic empowerment, and sustainable development. Hence, the contribution of lifelong learning to the economic well-being of rural women is significant, as it opens doors to economic independence, social mobility, and improved quality of life. Therefore, the need to assess the contribution of lifelong learning on economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State. This is necessary bearing in mind that the importance of rural women's contributions and addressing their specific needs can lead to more inclusive and equitable rural development, benefiting both individuals and communities as a whole. Lifelong learning can be accessed in various ways such as entrepreneurship development initiatives and financial literacy programs, community development programs and digital development programs however, community development programme will be discussed in details and in relation with how it

can promote the economic well-being of rural women.

Community development programme is the concept that addresses the quest to empower the local populace to identify and unravel their local needs. Olatunji (2012) emphasizes that community development are strategic activities implemented to address local needs, mobilize resources, and foster community participation for holistic development. Community development programme are organized efforts that engage community members in identifying strategies to enhance their collective quality of life, emphasizing participatory and sustainable approaches (Smith & Johnson, 2024). Therefore, community development programme plays a crucial role in improving the economic well-being of rural women. These programmes can include conducive and creating empowering environment that can give rural women opportunities for economic growth. Therefore, Orlukwu (2019) posited that women's empowerment means increasing women's authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect their lives. Besides, community development can create access to infrastructure such as roads, schools and health care services which may open opportunities to new knowledge, ideas and innovations for rural women and thereby having positive impact on their communities. The role of community development in rural society is that it can prepare citizens for the encounter with change and the incorporation of new people, new ideas, and new practices into the local place and can empower the local rural citizen in his or her encounter with the wider global economy (European Academy for Sustainable Rural Development 2019). Rural communities in Enugu State produce a lot of indigenous material like traditional wrapper, craft work such as beads, pot, baskets mat and other beautiful materials. Also, food items and recipes are made locally by these rural women. Consequently, the role of community development is to pave way for the global

community to view the unique and innate resources, products and ideas showcase by a particular community.

Additionally, community development programmes offer training and capacity-building opportunities for rural women, enabling them to acquire new skills, start businesses, and participate in income-generating activities. These skills can enhance their employability, increase their earning potential, and contribute to their overall economic. Also it creates opportunities for entrepreneurship support: community development initiatives support women in starting and growing their own businesses through access to financial resources, mentorship, and market linkages. By fostering entrepreneurship among rural women, these programs create opportunities for economic self-sufficiency and financial stability. It also creates room for social support: community development fosters a sense of community and social cohesion among rural women, providing them with a support network of peers, mentors, and allies (Omodia, 2017). This social support can help women navigate challenges, share knowledge and resources, and build solidarity within their communities.

Regrettably, Rural women in the study area may often have difficulty in gaining access to skills development programs even when the opportunities to engage in community development programmes or other lifelong learning initiatives are provided due to dilapidated roads in the interior areas coupled with the present high cost of transportation. This could limit the access to lifelong learning and impact economic well-being of rural women negatively. Without access to quality education and skill development programs, rural women are unable to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to participate fully in the state, national or global workforce or start their own business. This perpetuates a cycle of limited economic opportunities on low income levels, and dependence on traditional roles. Therefore, this research examined the utilization of community development

to promote economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

This study evaluated utilization of community development to promote economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State. The Study

1. Establish the extent to which utilization of community development programmes promote economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State

Research Question

The following research question guided the study;

1. To what extent do utilization of community development programmes promote the economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of younger and older women in Enugu State on utilizing of community development programmes to promote economic well-being of rural women.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of single and married women in Enugu State on utilizing of community development programmes to promote economic well-being of rural women.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. This design enabled the researchers to collect

data from only a few people considered to be representative of the entire group over a short period of time (Nworgu 2015). The population of the study was made of rural women in Enugu State with a total population of 2,020, 595 rural women. A sample size of 396 rural women was selected for the study and purposive and proportionate sampling techniques were used to select the 396 rural women that represents the entire population. A structured questionnaire designed by the researchers was used to elicit information from the rural women. The instrument was valeted by three experts in the department of Continuing Education and Development Studies Department, and one from Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Mathematics and Computer Education. Their suggestions, criticisms, corrections and recommendation were put into the final draft of the instrument. Cronbach alpha reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument and $r = 0.89$ was obtained. A total of 396 questionnaires were distributed and collected on the spot. Mean and Standard deviation was used to analyze the research questions posed for the study.

Results

The results of the findings are presented as follows:

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of rural women in Enugu State on the extent of utilizing community development programmesto promote economic well-being

n =396									
S/N	Items on Community Development Programmes	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Dec	
	Engaging in community development programmes has								
1	improved gender equality or traditional gender roles	212	107	60	17	3.30	0.88	HE	
2	improved on my health education	338	22	18	18	3.72	0.75	HE	
3	enhanced my access to marketing opportunities for products and services	338	20	18	20	3.71	0.78	HE	
4	empowered my participation in community development programs and	292	66	20	18	3.60	0.78	HE	

	voicing my opinion								
5	helped me to take on leadership roles within my community	137	183	57	19	3.11	0.82	HE	
6	assisted me connect with peers, mentors and professionals in the field of interest	253	106	22	15	3.51	0.77	HE	
7	improved my awareness of rights and legal literacy	292	65	17	22	3.58	0.81	HE	
8	enhanced my personal growth	215	143	20	18	3.40	0.78	HE	
9	increased my social inclusion in community supportive network	333	24	14	25	3.68	0.82	HE	
10	improved lifelong learning mindset to always seek knowledge	263	103	17	13	3.56	0.73	HE	
GRAND MEAN						3.43	0.89	HE	

The result in Table 1 above answered research question one which investigated the extent to what extent do utilizing community development programmes promote economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State. From the table, it was shown that the respondents have high extents in all the items, with mean scores greater than 2.50 cut off point set for the study. The grand mean score of 3.43 with standard deviation of 0.89 indicates that

community development programmes to a high extent promote the well-being of rural women in Enugu State.

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of younger and older women in Enugu State on the utilization of community development programmes to promote economic well-being of rural women.

Table 2: t-test analysis result of the mean scores of younger and older rural women in Enugu State on utilizing community development programmes to promote economic well-being

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig.	Decision
18 - 35 years (younger)	298	3.43	0.52	2.527	394	0.012	S
36 years and above (older)	98	3.28	0.56				

Table 2 shows that the t-calculated value of 2.527 is significant at 0.012 level of significance, which is less than 0.05 level of significance set for the study. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected as stated. This means that there is significant difference between the mean responses rating of age of rural women in Enugu State on the utilization of

community development programmes to promote economic well-being.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of single and married women in Enugu State on the utilization of community development to promote economic well-being of rural women.

Table 3: t-test analysis result of the mean scores of single and older rural women in Enugu State on the utilization of community development programmes to promote economic well-being

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig.	Decision
Single	213	3.50	0.54	4.359	394	0.000	S
Married	183	3.27	0.50				

Table 3 shows that the t-calculated value of 4.359 is significant at 0.000 level of significance which is less than 0.05 level of significance set for the study. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected as stated. This means that there is significant difference between the mean responses rating of marital status of rural women in Enugu State on the utilization of community development programmes to promote economic well-being.

Discussion

Current study revealed that utilization of community development programmes to promote economic well-being of rural women in Enugu State was to a high extent. The study is in line with the finding of Tauffiqu, Ambalika, and Rajesh (2016) that revealed women have been taking increasing interest in recent years in income generating activities, self-employment and entrepreneurship that also lead to property rights, political representation, social equality, personal right, family development, market development, community development and at last the nation development. Similarly, Emmanuel (2015) study showed that community based life skill training for women has helped a lot to build financial assets and control over material resources. This could be attributed to the fact that community development initiatives can provide women with access to resources, skill training, and opportunities for economic development. It may also increase income generation, improved financial stability, and enhanced overall quality of life of rural women.

Furthermore, there was significant difference between the mean responses rating of age and marital status of rural women in Enugu State on the utilization of community development programmes to promote economic well-being. This indicates that

Reference

Emmanuel, J J. (2015). Empowerment of women through vocational training. Basic Research Journal. 4(2):37-44.

a lot needs to be done to tailor community development initiatives that will promote the economic well-being of rural women in the study area regardless of the age and marital status. In agreement, Imakwu (2013) stated that lifelong learning can equip adults regardless of their age with the skills that can make them employable and participate in industrial and business economy of the country. This study suggests that, in order to advance economical or socially, rural women in the study area need to embrace community development programmes suited in their various communities in order to foster sustainable development and meet their local needs.

Conclusion

Emerging from the study indicates that continuous learning plays a vital role in empowering rural women and improving their socio-economic well-being. Access to quality community development programmes equips rural women with knowledge and capabilities to pursue better economic opportunities and make informed decisions regarding their financial eminence.

Recommendations

1. Given that community development programmes gives rural women the opportunity to adapt to the changing societal and economic demands, it then beckons on rural women to seek more continuous learning to enhance their economic well-being especially when it is provided within their communities
2. Government should organize more training on lifelong learning to accommodate more rural women to learn more new skills, update existing skills and enhance creativity among rural women

European Academy for Sustainable Rural Development (2019). The role of Education and lifelong learning in sustainable rural Development. Euracademy Association Press

- Ewelum, J.N., Ezeh, C.J. & Ogbunugwor, A.U. (2019). Influence of lifelong learning on socio-economic wellbeing of business women in Onitsha North local government area, Anambra state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Education and Research*, 5 (1) 40-44
- Imakwu, S. (2013). Contributions of lifelong learning to socio-economic development of Ebonyi State. Available at <https://www.jhumas.com> accessed 22/06/24
- Juan, I. M. (2016). What is adult education? Florida: San Sebastian ess.
- Nworgu, B.U. (2015). *Education Research: Basic issues and methodology*. Ibadan: Wisdom Publisher.
- Olatunji, I.O (2012). *Sustained Community Development in Nigeria*, Abuja: Development Press
- Oneoma, V.U (2020). Factors affecting women entrepreneur's financial performance in Umuahia Urbani market, Abia State, The *Nigeria Agricultural Journal*, 48(2), 230-235
- Omodia, S. M. (2017). A strategy for Socio-economic well-being of women in Enugu State. *Journal of Social Science*, 18(2), 113-117
- Orlukwu, B.O. (2019). Impact of development programmes on the socio-economic development of women in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Unpublished M. Ed Thesis. Department of Educational Foundations, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt
- Smith, J., & Johnson, L. (2024). *Participatory Approaches to Community Development*. *Journal of Social Development*, 15(2), 110-115.
- Sundharavadivel G, & William E M (2018). Lifelong Learning For Economic Development. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research and Innovations*. 6, (2) 244-249
- Tauffiqu, A. Ambalika S. & Rajesh, K .S. (2016). Women Empowerment through Skills Development & Vocational Education. *SMS Journal of Entrepreneurship & Innovation*, 2: 34-35