Original Article

SKILLS ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES AND POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG WOMEN IN CALABAR MUNICIPALITY OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The main thrust of this study was to determine skills acquisition programmes and poverty reduction among women in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 327 respondents was used for the study. The sample was selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The reliability estimate of the instruments was established through the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Simple regression analysis was the statistical technique employed to test the hypotheses under study. Each hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that hairdressing and fashion designing significantly relate to poverty reduction among women in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that skills training programmes should be encouraged among women to help reduce poverty among rural women and also to be self-reliant.

Keyword: Skills acquisition programmes, poverty, reduction, women.

Introduction

Poverty is widespread but dynamic; its pattern changes over time. The problem of poverty, and the corresponding approach to it, remains one of the most challenging issues threatening the development efforts (of governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals) and the survival of humanity. In 2019, 478 million people lived in extreme poverty, it is estimated that in 2021, 490 million people in Africa live under the poverty line of 1.90 PPP $ / day. (United Nations, 2021). Nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America are currently with the highest level of poverty and consequently with the lowest level of socioeconomic development, frequent violence, excessive degree of unrest, and low standard of living (World Bank, 2020). Over the last few decades, new perspectives on poverty have challenged the focus on income and consumption as the defining condition of poor people. Studies of the

problems of poor people and communities, and of the obstacles and opportunities to improving their situation, have led to an understanding of poverty as a complex set of deprivations. For example, lack of education often defines the condition of a poor person but it is also an obstacle to other important aspects of a person's well-being, e.g., employment and income, health care, and other basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation. These are also interrelated with discrimination and lack of access to justice with the lowest level of socioeconomic development, frequent violence, excessive degree of unrest, and low standard of living (World Bank,2020).

The need to reduce poverty, especially among women to the barest minimum has been the major concern of the world over. Nigeria has always spearheaded this campaign with a view to alleviating poverty in Africa. However, the challenge of implementation strategies has been enormous. No doubt, Nigeria is a great country endowed with vast economic potential but the level of poverty especially among her female citizenry has made the realization of self-sustenance far from being a reality. Giving this scenario therefore motivated the researcher to examine the trends in and nature of implementation of community development programme alongside the role of self-help projects in Nigeria in recent decades.

In Nigeria and Cross River State in particular today, the increased rate of poverty, unemployment, corruption, and so many other social problems have become worrisome to the government and to every well-meaning citizen. Most people irrespective of their gender and the location do not have the knowledge and skills that can enable them to be self-employed or take jobs where they are available. The incidence of poverty is on the high side about 70% of the total population has been classified as poor (Nigeria Entrepreneurship Initiative, 2009).

Poverty is general scarcity or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. It is a comprehensive socio-economic virus that afflicts mankind in different ways or stages. Poverty is a multifaceted concept, which includes social, economic, and political elements. Absolute poverty or destitution refers to the lack of means necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Relative poverty occurs when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standards as compared to the rest of the society and so would vary from country to country, place to place, or from person to person sometimes within the same country (Aboyede, 2010).

Olabisi & Asor 2022 noted that poverty exists when the basic needs of life are absent, and the basic needs go beyond food, water, shelter, and clothing to include a lack of essential facilities and viable programmes that enhance people's well-being. Poverty is usually measured as either absolute or relative poverty, the latter being actually an index of income inequality. Absolute poverty refers to a set standard that is consistent over time and between countries. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than US $1.25 per day, and moderate poverty as less than $2 a day however, a person or family with access to subsistence resources, e.g. subsistence farmers, may have a low cash income without a correspondingly low standard of living since they do not living on their cash income but using it as a top up. The World Bank estimates that in 2001, 1.1 billion people had consumption levels below $1 a day and 2.7 billion lived on less than $2 a day. A dollar a day, in nations that do not use the dollar as currency, does not translate to living a day on the amount of local currency as determined by the exchange rate.

Poverty is often classified into three variables, income poverty, vulnerability, and empowerment. Income poverty stands for lack of income to afford

the minimum basic necessities of life. Vulnerability involves the probability of risk today of being in poverty or falling into deeper poverty in the future. Empowerment is further classified into three categories namely, Economic, Social, and Political empowerment. Economic empowerment refers to the economic security of oneself. Social empowerment refers to the ability to participate in decision-making in the community including the household and non-family groups.

Most Nigerian women which Calabar Municipality is a part, are poor and this has been attributed to a number of factors to be responsible for their poverty: high level of illiteracy, lack of basic needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, healthcare), lack of resources, lack of credit facilities, inadequate knowledge on investment, inaccessible banking facilities, high- interest rates from money lenders, Societal stereotype and stigmatization, these and many other factors work together to make women poor. Poverty, they say, is a woman's face because out of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 70% are women (UNDP) report of 2013). Women constitute 50% of the world's population and they work for between 10 to 18 hours daily on the average performing of 2/3 of the total work of the world. In spite of this high contribution of women in development, they receive only about 10% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the property (Salisu & Ohwona, (1999).

Nigeria is a country endowed with abundant natural and human resources with a landed area of 923,768 square kilometers, rich agricultural land, and a population of about 150 million according to the 2006 National Census. Nigeria as a country shares land borders with the Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroon in the East, and Niger in the North. The World Development Indicators puts the population growth (annual %) at 2.4 while the GNI (current US$) is 100.7 billion. The GNI per capita,

atlas method (current US$) is 620.00. Nigeria is the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa and is also termed the ninth most populous country in the world. Though Nigeria is endowed with abundant natural and human resources a lot of people live below the poverty line and there are disparities between the rich and the poor. Nigeria is poor due to mismanagement of resources. While Nigeria has the potential to be a rich country due to all these resources, it is a poor country. The per capita income of Nigeria dropped from $ 1000 in 1985 to $ 275 in 1997 and to $75 in 2007. The country has a high unemployment rate. A nation's population is usually almost divided evenly between males and females except under peculiar circumstances such as war or highly selective immigration which normally affect males more than females. However, throughout the ages, the sharing of power, wealth, influence, employment, etc., between men and women has never been close to equality. The UNDP, in its Human Development Report in 2005 listed some examples to show that in spite of the considerable progress in developing women's capacities, women and men still live in an unequal world. poverty is the lack of multiple resources that leads to hunger and physical deprivation, as the lack of voice, power, and independence that subjects them to exploitation (Betiang, olabisi, Ekuri & Angioha 2021)

The need to reduce poverty, especially among women to the barest minimum has been the major concern of the world over. Women need to be empowered financially and economically to enhance their quality of life and contribute maximally to societal development (Olabisi & Tawo 2017). Nigeria has always spearheaded this campaign with a view to alleviating poverty in Africa. However, the challenge of implementation strategies has been enormous. No doubt, Nigeria is a great country endowed with vast economic potential but the level of poverty especially among her female citizenry has

made the realization of self-sustenance far from being a reality (Alese, 2017).

However, poverty reduction among women is their capacity to bring about economic change for themselves. It implies their ability to generate income in order to provide adequately for themselves and their families without depending solely on their husbands or on social welfare.

It is also their ability to acquire assets and contribute to the economics of their homes and community. Poverty reduction among women increases their access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property, and other productive assets. It is a prerequisite for sustainable development and for achieving the Millennium Development Goal.

Cross River State has not been insulated from the various efforts at poverty reduction by successive governments in the state to address the issue of poverty such as facilitating access to credit/grants and loans to encourage self-employment of these women, the establishment of adult education centers to enable these women to acquire the basic literacy skill of reading and writing, Better Life for Rural dwellers, Community-based Agricultural programme, etc. Nevertheless, these poverty reduction initiatives by various governments and Chairmen of Councils at different times have not produced the expected results despite the huge amount of material and financial resources committed to each of the programmes.

One of the key responsibilities of government is to create a social order that addresses the total well-being of the citizenry, by providing the essential social amenities like food, shelter, and clothing as well as the opportunity to create both biological and economic livelihood. However, due to the increased population the attendant unemployment, and the lack of capacity by the government to provide for everybody, there is a clamor for providing opportunities for forms of education that can aid people in acquiring self-sustenance by the government. It is in this connection that Akpomi (2008) advocated that the only sure way government at all levels can reduce the preponderance of unemployment in the country is to create avenues for skills identification and acquisition along the lines of competencies exhibited by the participants.

Skapa (2017) defined skill as the ability to do something well, usually acquired through training or experience. According to them, Skill acquisition on the other hand involves the development of a new skill, practice or a way of doing things usually acquired through experience. They also stated that the absence of vocational skills and competence on the part of individuals has been considered to be what has been hindering the economic development of most African countries, particularly Nigeria. In Nigeria for instance, the educational system which was experienced at post-independence placed emphasis and value on academic excellence rather than the acquisition of vocational skills which tends to prepare them for a more fulfilling lifestyle within the society. In other words, the system placed its beam of light on subjects in the humanities or arts to the detriment of vocational courses that facilitate practical skill acquisition which is believed to be more important to the development of the country. This has resulted in a high level of poverty.

If the country, the State, and Communities must achieve its goal of poverty reduction, especially among women, then proper skills acquisition programmes must be put in place. While every individual is expected to live a comfortable life, nourished with a sound economic base, an avenue through which this can be realized especially among women is through vocational skills acquisition. A vocational skills acquisition programmes has greater potential to achieve this goal because it focuses on the development of skills and attributes that enable

the realization of opportunity through which one can live a flourishing, meaningful, and functional life as well as an avenue through which poverty and unemployment can be ameliorated because it is geared towards skills acquisition and occupational preparedness.

It is against this background, this study seeks to investigate how skills acquisition programmes in areas of hairdressing and fashion designing influence poverty reduction among women in Calabar Municipality.

Statement of the problem

Poverty reduction programmes have not been effective nor yielded the expected results especially as it concerns women in Cross River State. Though the State government and Chairmen of Councils in different regimes have tried to facilitate access to credit/ grant and soft loans to encourage self-employment of these women, established centers for the training of adults to enable them to acquire the basic literacy skill of reading and writing to, initiate programmes such as Better life for rural women, Community-based Agricultural Project, People empowerment Programme.

 All these programmes are meant to scale up activities that would bring about poverty reduction and the liberation of these women from their ugly plight of poverty and unemployment but these efforts have not made any headway. This is so because about 70% of women in Calabar Municipality are still not meaningfully or gainfully engaged in any job or business that can make them functional in the society, self-reliant, and bring real changes in their lives. This situation is assuming a more permanent posture in the study area such that family upheavals, marital incompatibility, broken homes emotional instability, inferiority complex, family disharmony, divorce, child abandonment, child abuse, single parenthood, fear of unknown and other detestable happening have tremendously increase. This ugly

situation has cut across young women, single women, and even married women in the study area and in most cases has driven them into indiscriminate sexual activities in order to meet ends meet which often leads to devastating consequences of contact with sexually transmitted diseases (STD) that may render them childless or even sending them to their graves earlier than expected yet many have died in the process of terminating an unwanted pregnancy.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the skills acquisition programmes and poverty reduction among women unemployed in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically the study sought to ascertain;

1.   Whether hairdressing skills acquisition programmes relates to poverty reduction among women unemployed

2.   How fashion designing skills acquisition programmes relates to poverty reduction among women unemployed

Hypotheses

1.   There is no significant relationship between hairdressing skills acquisition programmes and poverty reduction among women unemployed

2.   There is no significant relationship between fashion designing skills acquisition programmess and poverty reduction among women unemployed

Method

The research design to be adopted for this study is the survey design. The area for this study is Calabar Municipality of Cross River State. The population for this study consists of all the 3266 women in skill acquisition programmes in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State. The purposive and accidental sampling technique was adopted for the study. The research applied the accidental sampling since the cost of a census for surveying the entire population is too high. Accidental sampling is a type of non-

probability sampling. Accidental sampling was used to select the sample for this study as the researcher only administered the instrument to staff she found at the time of data collection.

The sample of this study is made up of 327 which is 10 % of women accidentally sampled from Calabar Municipality of Cross River State. The instrument used for the study was 22 items questionnaire titled Skill Acquisition Programs and Poverty Reduction Among Women Questionnaire (SAPPRQ). This instrument was constructed on a four-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

To ensure that the selected items for inclusion in the questionnaire are capable of eliciting relevant responses needed to measure the set objectives for the study, the researcher first presented the designed questionnaire to two experts in the Department of Test and Measurement Faculty of Education who checked for the appropriateness of items, content coverage, clarity of language and suitability of the items. The reliability of the instrument was established through the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The reliability index ranges from .78 to .83.

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between Hairdressing skills acquisition and poverty reduction among women unemployed graduates. The independent variable in this hypothesis is Hairdressing skills acquisition; while the dependent variable is poverty reduction among women unemployed graduates. Simple regression analysis was then employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Simple regression result of the relationship between Hairdressing skills acquisition and poverty reduction among women unemployed graduates

Model	R	R. square	Adjusted R. square	Std error of the estimate	
1	.933(a)	.871	.870	1.75829	
Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	p-value
Regression	6783.797	1	6783.797	2194.273	.000(a)
Residual	1007.859	326	3.092		
Total	7791.655	327			

*Significant at .05 level.

The simple regression analysis of the relationship between hair-dressing skills acquisition on the poverty reduction among women unemployed graduates yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of .933 and a multiple regression R-square (R^2) of .871 and an adjusted R^2 of .870. The adjusted R^2 of .870 indicated that the Hairdressing skills acquisitions account for 8% of the determinant poverty reduction among women among unemployed graduates in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that Hairdressing skills acquisitions are relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F = 2194.273 and the sig. value of .000 (or p<.05) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 326. The implication of this result is that Hairdressing skills acquisition is a significant predictor of poverty reduction among women and unemployed graduates. The identified equation to understand this relationship was that Poverty reduction among

women = 6.165 + 1.328 (Hair dressing skills acquisition).

Hypothesis two

Fashion designing skills acquisition does not significantly relate to poverty reduction among women unemployed graduates. The independent variable in this hypothesis is Fashion designing skills acquisition; while the dependent variable is poverty reduction among women among unemployed graduates. Simple regression analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Simple regression result of the relationship between Fashion designing skills acquisition and poverty reduction among women among unemployed graduates

Model	R	R. square	Adjusted R. Square	Std error of the estimate	
1	.928(a)	.862	.862	1.81577	
Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	p-value
Regression	6716.832	1	6716.832	2037.253	.000(a)
Residual	1074.823	326	3.297		
Total	7791.655	327			

* Significant at .05 level.

The simple regression analysis of the relationship between fashion designing skills acquisition on the poverty reduction among women among unemployed graduates yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of .928 and a multiple regression R-square (R^2) of .862 and an adjusted R^2 of .862. The adjusted R^2 of .862 indicated that the Fashion designing skills acquisition accounted for 86.2 % of the determinant poverty reduction among women among unemployed graduates in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that Fashion designing skills acquisition is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F = 2037.253 and the sig. value of .000 (or p<.05) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 326. The implication of this result is that Fashion designing skills acquisition is a significant predictor of poverty reduction among women and unemployed graduates. The identified equation to understand this relationship was that Poverty reduction among women =3.785 + 1.548 (Fashion designing skills acquisition).

Discussion of findings

This section is concerned with the discussion of findings that emerged from the results of the analysis. The discussion is presented in accordance to the variables of the study.

The result of the first hypothesis study indicated that hairdressing skills acquisition programmes significantly influenced poverty reduction. The finding is in line with the view of Akpama, Esang, Asor, and Osang (2011) who observed that the acquisition of vocational skills leads to a significant reduction of poverty among young adults. Nwakwo and Unachukwu (2016) who also reported that vocational skills acquisition concerns itself with the collection of formalized teaching processes that bring about traits and educate everyone interested in business creation or small business development. Maigida, Saba, and Namkere (2016) further support that an individual's entrepreneurial skill acquisition in technical vocational education and training is tailored in a way that it will bring self-employability, employment generation, and economic self-sufficiency to Nigerians.

The result of the second hypothesis indicated that fashion designing skills acquisition programmes significantly influenced poverty reduction. The finding of this study agrees with that of Hamabeh (2015) who studied fashion design and accessory skill acquisition programme and observed that fashion and design training is very central and expedient for the acquisition of skills, abilities, values, attitudes, and competence essential for purposes of employment on the improvement as well as enhancement of rural women status. Nsifon (2015) also supported that fashion and design are less capital intensive in terms of facilities needed for the training; an individual trained with the ability to buy a sewing machine and an iron such one can embark on self-fending, thus reducing dependence and poverty.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the findings, it was observed that hairdressing skills acquisition have a significant relationship among women in terms of poverty reduction. The researchers observed that involvement of women hairdressing skills programmes would reduce poverty and also be self-employ. Fashion designing skills acquisition have significant relationship among women in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following skills recommendations were made:

1. Fashion designing training should be encouraged as it is very central for the acquisition of skills, abilities, values, attitudes, and competence essential for purposes of employment, on the improvement as well as enhancement of rural women's economic status.

2. Hairdressing and haircut skill training should be encouraged among women to help reduce poverty among rural women.

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