

**AFRICAN SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL
FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
IMO STATE UNIVERSITY
NIGERIA**

VOL. 8 NO. 1 MARCH 2019

**ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS, INVOLVEMENT IN INCOME
GENERATING ACTIVITIES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN OYIGBO LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to assess the extent of rural involvement in income generating activities for community development in Oyigbo Local Government Area, Rivers State. To achieve this objective, three research questions were posed. A sample size of 650 rural women was drawn using the simple random sampling techniques. Rural Women Involvement in Income Generating Activities for Community Development Questionnaire (RWIGACDQ) was the data collecting instrument for the study. The instrument was subjected to face validity by three in adult education and extra mural studies department from the University of Nigeria, NSUKA. The reliability coefficient value of 0.88 was obtained through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). Data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the mean. The findings revealed that rural women were involved in agricultural activities such as goat rearing, poultry farming, cassava processing, and palm oil processing, for non-agricultural activities, the study revealed that rural women did not involve themselves in tailoring, soap production, bead making and weaving. It was recommended among others that agricultural extension agents should expand their scope to accommodate varieties of agricultural activities like piggery, fish feeds, and snail rearing in addition to cultivation of crops.

Keywords: Rural areas, rural women, income generating activities, community development.

Introduction

The term rural area simply refers to countryside, places that are characterized with the absence of basic social amenities - absence of pure drinking water, electricity or any other reliable source of power, good roads, civic centres, health facilities, good school and social amenities among others that make living easier and more meaningful. Olajide (2014),

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described rural communities as characterized with high incidence of poverty, illiteracy and disease. In such circumstances it may be difficult for people to maximize their full potentials. Rural women therefore refer to women who live in rural areas. According to Ngwu (2006), women constitute the highest percentage of the rural dwellers in Nigeria. He further observed that most women living in the rural areas engage in subsistence farming. Most are illiterate house wives who do not have tangible sources of income while some have been literally abandoned by their spouses who reside in the cities on the excuse of white collar jobs. In some situations, their husband visit home seasonally with little or no support in between seasons. Some other are widows whose only recognizable sources of livelihood is petty trading, in all these circumstances, rural women are still the busiest category of people in terms of time burden. They labour in and out of time just to keep themselves and families going on (FAO. 2011).

Rural women are key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development and at the family and community level. No doubts, they are instrumental in the achievement of food security, income generation, as well as improving rural livelihoods and the overall wellbeing of their families. Obidiegwu (2013) asserted that women were instrumental in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This is because their impacts are felt right from the family levels to the wider. According to Saleh and Lasisi (2011) rural women are: hardworking and resourceful group which if properly integrated, they can provide lubricants to the wheels of development required for sustainable development.

Income generating activities consist of small business managed by group of people to increase their household income through livelihood diversification. This may involve vocational, skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which can be used to generate income. This is done with sole aim of improving the quality of life of people living below poverty level as well as upgrading the skills, knowledge, attitude and values of those who are not self-sufficient.

Ki-Moon (2017) asserted that income generation includes a range of productive activities by individuals or group geared towards gaining or increasing income. This may be through the production of enough food to feed oneself or oneself or one's family (self-employment), generation of money from investments (adding to personal resources through investment) or utilization of one's skills for money (working for others). The United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affair (UNESA) (2008) described income generating programme as an intervention which impacts vocational skills or provide capital or commodities that enhance the capacity of individuals or groups to generate income.

Income generating programme for rural women entails the education and training of rural women in income generating skills. It is imperative to note that the powerlessness and dependency which characterized the life of most rural women are partly caused by lack of education, training and employment. Income generating programme therefore offers support and a way out of extreme poverty for rural. Sholagberu & Kayode, (2017) perceives that income generating activities offer women the opportunity to join the labour force and to learn necessary, skills for involvement in economic activities. Income generating activities (IGAs) can

be seen as the initiation phase in the progression to small business development. The acquisition of technical skills places one on a better position to acquire business skills.

Income generating activities of rural women can be divided into two broad categories: agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Agricultural income generating activities include livestock maintenance: (feeding, cleaning, goats, other livestock care), poultry: (cleaning, feeding, medical care, collecting eggs) Mini pond culture: (cleaning, feeding and nursing), Cattle and goat, Poultry, Aquaculture, Vegetable cultivation, Vegetable cultivation: (preparing plot, watering, weeding, other care of vegetables) Bee keeping. Non-agricultural income generating activities include small business, wage labour, handicraft, tailoring, street vendor: (selling various products such as cooked rice, dry fish, egg, milk, honey, soap) running small business: (grocery shop, firewood business, tea shop, call center), Tailoring: (dress making, Katha sewing, mending clothes), Handicrafts: (basket, mats, nets), working as a wage labour.

Community development is a multi-dimensional process involving such areas as agriculture, health education, provision of rural infrastructures, social life, political and economic issues, commerce and industry among others (Akande, 2016). Abiona (2010), is of the view that community development is concerned with the self-sustaining improvement of people in rural and urban areas and it implies a broad based re-organization and mobilization of the masses so as to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily tasks of their lives and with the changes consequently upon this.

According to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2010), to achieve a global fight against rural poverty, a number of challenges have to be tackled in order to unleash the potentials of rural women and fight rural poverty. The organization further stated that rural poverty includes low productivity and low income jobs, lack of social protection, lack of basic work rights and insufficient voice and poor presentation. In other words, these are the barriers that limit rural women's potential and hinder effectiveness in both family and community roles which call for urgent attention.

Statement of the Problem

The situation of rural women in many developing countries has deteriorated remarkably in recent enjoying their human rights and hamper their efforts to improve their lives. Ngwu (2006) observed that many people particularly women in Africa have the notion that to be born a woman means to have less scope for personal development, less freedoms, responsibilities and privileges. The situation is more pervasive in rural areas where women's participation in development activities is limited as a result of influence from culturally assigned roles coupled with inadequate infrastructures and social services. It is believed that a woman's traditional duty is to keep the home, work in the farm, and teach her female children the rudiments of home keeping. This perception has led some of the rural women to resign to fate, believing that they cannot go beyond their culturally assigned roles.

More so, most rural women lack means of livelihood and opportunity for economic independence. Many Nigerian women in rural areas live with no electricity, no pipe borne and drinkable running water, poor roads and poor health facilities (Ogbonnaya, 2015). These challenges more often than not hinder their economic ambitions and leave their potentials unharnessed. It is obvious that these segment known as rural women constitute a great percentage of the entire population, hence their importance in determining the survival of their environments. This

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necessity underscores the need for activities that will help generate incomes as an indispensable tool for raising the status of themselves, their families, their communities for sustainable development.

Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the extent of rural women's involvement in income generating programmes for community development in Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the following:

1. Extent of rural women involvement in agricultural income generating activities for community development.
2. Extent of rural women involvement in non-agricultural income generating activities for community development.
3. Strategies for improving involvement of rural women in income generating activities for community development.

Research Question

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What is the extent of involvement rural women in agricultural income generating activities for community development?
2. What is the extent involvement of rural women in non-agricultural income generating activities for community development?
3. What are the strategies for enhancing the involvement of rural women in income generating activities for community development?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. The population for the study was 1795 rural women in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State out of this population, 650 was chosen as sample size using simple random sampling techniques. Rural Women Involvement in Income Generating Activities of Community Development Questionnaire (RW1GACDQ) was the data collecting instrument used to elicit information in the study. The instrument contained personal data of the respondents in sector A, section B contains thirty (30) questionnaire items that was divided into three (3) clusters. Responses for research questions One and Two were patterned as thus; Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) while Research Question Three was weighted 4-1 points with strongly agree (4-points), agree (3-points), disagree (2-points) and strongly disagree (1-point).

The instrument was face validated by three validates, who are scholars in Adult Education in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Instruction Technology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The reliability coefficient of 88 was, obtained using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) after administering 35 copies of the questionnaire to 35 rural women in Etche L.G.A, which was not used in the study. Data collected were analyzed using the mean, while research question three was ranked.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of involvement of rural women in agricultural income generating activities in Oyigbo L.G.A, Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean scores on the extent rural women are involved in agricultural income generating activities in Oyigbo L.G.A, Rivers State

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
1.	Poultry	3.54	Very High Extent
2.	Fishery	2.15	Low Extent
3	Snail Bearing	1.35	Very Low Extent
4.	Goat rearing	3.56	High Extent
5.	Piggery	L.23	Very Low Extent
6.	Vegetable cultivation	3.55	Very High Extent
7.	Yam cultivation	3.55	Low Extent
8.	Palm oil processing	2.58	High Extent
9.	Cassava processing	3.45	Very High Extent
10.	Cocoyam cultivation	3.27	High Extent

Table 1 showed the rural women were involved in the following income generating agricultural activities such as poultry, vegetable cultivation, cassava processing, goat rearing, palm oil processing, cocoyam processing, and cassava and yam cultivation. It also revealed that rural women were not actively involved in fishery and piggery.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of involvement of rural women in non-agricultural income generating activities in Oyigbo L.G.A Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean scores on The Extent Rural Women Are Involved In Non-Agricultural Income Generating Activities in Oyigbo L.G.A. Rivers State.

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
11.	Cooperative savings (Isusu)	3.54	Very High Extent
12.	Tailoring	1.66	Low Extent
13.	Hair dressing	1.56	Low Extent
14.	Small scale business	2.76	High Extent
15.	Soap production	1.96	Low Extent
16.	Making of beads	1.82	Low Extent
17.	Bakery and confectioneries	1.14	Very Low Extent
18.	Indoor/Outdoor decoration	1.43	Very Low Extent
19.	Pedicure and manicure	1.43	Very Low Extent
20.	Weaving (with woollen material)	3.71	High Extent

Table 2 analysis revealed that for non-agricultural income generating activities, rural women were only involved cooperative savings and weaving. The study revealed that rural women were not involved in the following non-agricultural generating activities such as in hair dressing, tailoring, small scale business, soap production, making of beads and confectioneries, indoor/outdoor decoration, pedicure and weaving.

Research Question 3: Mean scores on strategies for enhancing the involvement of rural women in income generating activities for community development?

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Table 3: Mean scores on strategies for enhancing the involvement of rural women in income generating activities for community development

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
21.	Motivation of women	3.66	3 rd
22.	Training on skill acquisitions	3.23	5 th
23.	Government support and collaboration	2.89	8 th
24.	Support for opening of small scale business	3.12	6 th
25.	Periodic visits by extension workers	3.96	1 st
26.	Organizing functional literacy programmes	2.72	10 th
27.	Granting of soft loans to women	3.84	2 nd
28.	Reorientation of cultural myths	2.93	7 th
29.	Equality between men and women	2.83	9 th
30.	Encouraging family planning	3.55	4 th
Grand Mean		3.27	

Analysis on Table 3 revealed that motivation of rural women, training on skill acquisition, government supports and collaborations, support for opening of small scale business, periodic visits by extension workers, organizing functional literacy programmes, granting of soft loans, reorientation of cultural myths, equality between me and women and encouraging family planning were among the strategies for enhancing the involvement of rural women in income generating activities.

Discussion of Findings

Result of the findings in research questionnaire showed that rural women were involved in poultry, goat rearing, vegetable cultivation, youth cultivation, palm oil production, cassava production and cocoyam production in Oyigbo Local Government Area, Rivers State. The findings also showed that rural women were not involved adequately in fishery, snail rearing and piggery farming. More so, the study showed that rural women do not adequately participate in tailoring, hair dressing, soap production, bead making, bakery and confectioneries, pedicure and manicure. This implies that rural women were not actively involved in varieties of income generating activities. The concentrations of rural women are on agricultural activities hence their chances to benefit from non-agricultural income generating activities become limited.

The finding is in agreement Saleh and Lasis (2011), who observed that rural women hardworking and are resourceful economic agents who contribute to the income of families and the growth of communities in a multitude of ways if properly integrated. The finding also agreed with FAO (2011) who asserts that rural women produce the bulk of world food crops, labour in and out of time just to keep themselves and the families going on.

The findings equally revealed that there are agricultural activities yet to be covered by rural women as shown in their low extent of involvement. They include fish rearing, piggery farming, and snail and cattle rearing. These areas are known to be very lucrative and yield enough income.

Conclusion

Based on the findings the study concludes that rural women form majority of the population in the rural areas, and are deeply involved in agricultural activities that generate income. Rural women form active and reserve labour force though they rarely own the means of

production. However, one may wonder from this finding, why rural women in Imo State are poor even though they involve in agricultural activities. This may be because of their non-adaptation to innovative agricultural practices. Rural women simply retire their fates to subsistence farming since there are no external supports.

Recommendations

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

1. The State Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Agencies for Adult and Non- Formal Education should design detailed curriculum for extension education paying particular attention to improved agricultural practices.
2. Agricultural Extensions Agents should expand their scope to accommodate varieties of agricultural activities like piggery, fish feeds, and snail rearing in addition to cultivation of crops.
3. The government should be matters of urgency provide accessibility credit facilities for rural women through their cooperative societies to assist them go beyond subsistence production in their various agricultural activities.
4. State and LGA Agencies for Adult and Non-Formal Education should devise means of facilitating the rural women on non-agricultural income generating activities in their various communities.

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