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Participation of Rural Women in Vocational Training Programmes in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

The study determined the current level of participation of rural women's in the vocational training programme in Northern Nigeria and strategies of improving rural women's participation in the vocational training programme. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated. The study adopted a mixed method using quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study was carried out in Northern Nigeria, and three states were sampled from each geopolitical zone. Multistage sampling technique was used to sample 4,500 subjects; 1,500 subjects from each zone. Questionnaire and focus group discussion guide were the instruments for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the reliability coefficient of each cluster 0.87 and 0.89; while the coefficient of the entire 23 items questionnaire was found to be 0.91. Questionnaire return rate was 83.36%. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyse the data to answer the research questions, while Levene's test Statistic, one–way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Scheffe Post Hoc test were used to test the hypotheses. Focus group discussion was made under two major themes; women's level of participation and strategies for improving women participation in vocational training. Findings, among others, were; the participation of rural women was low and creating awareness among rural women on the importance of vocational training was the prominent strategy identified for improving women's participation in vocational training. The study recommended, among others that, there is a need to create awareness on the importance of vocational training for women and to increase the number of women trainers.

Key words: ***Rural women participation, vocational training programmes***

Introduction

The issue of poverty is a global phenomenon. It was estimated that about 1.2 billion people are living below one dollar per day (Ajulor, 2013). Nigeria cannot be exempted from this situation, it is a country that has over 70% of the population rated as poor and about 60% living in absolute poverty. Large percentages of Nigerians are farmers who depend on agriculture for livelihood. It is disheartening to note that these peasant farmers often go short of food during the pre-harvest period, not mentioning other needs that may arise. This situation makes many of them in rural areas suffer from malnutrition and other related diseases as a result of poverty. Women and the households headed by women are usually faced with chronic poverty among rural dwellers; this makes some of them suffer abuse from

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men as they try to seek for a means of livelihood (Ajulor, 2013). The absolute poverty in Nigeria and particularly Northern Nigeria is described as paradox compared to the country's immense wealth and knowledge. Poverty is defined as deprivation from resources, which may include economic, physical, and social; those are needed to achieve sustainable development (Olawuyi & Adetunji, 2013).

The poverty resulting in misery, and squalor of rural life are a piece of common knowledge but what is more pitiable is the condition of the rural women fork in the rural areas which are subjected to a most unjust and dehumanizing condition (Abah, 2008). The life of rural inhabitants have thus been tied to poverty because of a lack of improvement in vocational training. Several governments had made an effort to eradicate poverty most notably in the rural areas by establishing agencies such as family support programmes, better lives for rural women, youth empowerment schemes, national poverty eradication programmes, among others. However, their implementation left much to be desired as their approaches were top-down and the programmes in themselves glaringly elitist. Women continue to remain poor and backward in a country that seems to be moving forward daily (Olawuyi & Adetunji, 2013). The programmes have not made a serious impact on the lives of rural dwellers; it seems that the effort of the government is not well directed towards effective means of poverty alleviation. An agency such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme had the mandate to wipe out poverty from Nigeria by the year 2010 (Bindir, 2002) but the poverty situation was worsened from 54.4% in 2004 to 60.9% in 2010. In order to eradicate poverty, and achieve socio-economic empowerment and sustainable development among rural women, vocational training is the key. Kehinde and Adewuyi (2015) affirmed that skill development is key to improving rural productivity and economic growth. It is further noted that education and training are powerful tools against poverty and hunger. Fluitman (2002) agreed that there is a link between poverty alleviation, vocational training, and increased growth productivity and innovation. The improvement in vocational skills in the lives of women will undoubtedly improve their output, quality of life, diversity, and health. Vocational education and training (VET) is a training which is designed to enable the trainee to acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, understanding, and attitudes needed for the efficient performance of one's chosen occupation. VET is essential as it prepares a person for life, and it provides the competencies which are necessary for a democratic society. The societal and economic development of a nation directly depends on the strength of VET as it provides access to skills development and entry routes into the labour market (Uwaifo, 2009).

Women often have different training needs than men since they are more likely to work as contributing family workers, subsistence farmers, home-based micro-entrepreneurs, or low-paid seasonal labourers, in addition to handling their domestic work and care responsibilities (Jutting & Morrisson, 2009). Women are victims of poverty for they are generally resource poor, that has led to malnutrition and poor health. Women form the backbone of rural development; they can be easily engendered for meaningful change that would lead to national development. They represent the dominant force for change, mostly untapped resources that could boost the rural economy, higher growth rate and increase food production. Edu and Edu

(2012) noted that any development plan without women being involved is like overlooking an essential factor in the production process. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance the participation of rural women in the vocational training programmes since vocational skills have the potential to enhance ones' socio-economic status thereby reducing poverty and insecurity.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to determine:

1. The extent of rural women's participation in vocational training programmes in Northern Nigeria.
2. The strategies of improving rural women's participation in vocational training programme in Northern Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What is the extent of participation of rural women's in vocational training programmes in Northern Nigeria?
2. What are the strategies of improving participation rural women's in vocational training programmes in Northern Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant

H_{o1}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of women in different States in Northern Nigeria on the extent of their participation in the vocational training programmes.

H_{o2}: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of experts in (Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and women in different States in Northern Nigeria on the strategies of improving rural women's participation in the vocational training programmes.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study was carried out in Northern Nigeria; Northern Nigeria is made up of 19 states in three geopolitical zones (North West, North Central and North East). Multistage sampling technique was used to sample 4,500 rural Women; 1,500 rural Women from each zone and 500 rural Women from each State. The States sampled are Jigawa, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kwara, Niger, Plateau, Bauchi, Taraba and Yobe States. Questionnaires and focus group discussion guides were the instruments used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the extent of homogeneity of the items and the reliability coefficient of each cluster were 0.95, and 0.89; while

the coefficient of the entire 23 items questionnaire was found to be 0.91. Questionnaire return rate was 83.36%.

The focus group discussion guide that was used was designed by researchers and it comprised two open-ended questions which allowed further probing into the types of vocational training programmes rural women participate in, and the strategies for improving their participation which is the focus of research question one and two, respectively. The focus group discussions were held after the retrieval of the questionnaire. The discussions were held with 150 participants in three Northern states, that is, 50 participants from each geo-political zone. Not all the participants were fluent in the English language, and therefore, the discussions were largely conducted in the Hausa language. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality issues were observed. The data from the focus group discussion was audiotaped on the permission of the participants. The discussion took one hour in each state.

Mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse the data to answer the research questions, while Shapiro Wilk and Levene's tests determined the normality of the data and homogeneity of the variances, respectively. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, and Scheffe Post Hoc pairwise comparison was used to find the group where the significant difference lies. The data from the focus discussions were analysed using content analysis.

Decisions on the research questions were based on the resulting means score interpreted relative to the concept of real lower and upper limits of numbers. The standard deviation was used to decide on the closeness or otherwise of the respondents to the mean in their responses. Any item with a standard deviation of less than 1.96 indicated that the respondents were not too far from the mean or one another in their responses and any item having standard deviation equal or above-stated value signified that respondents were too far from the mean. Decisions on the hypotheses were based on comparing the significant value with ($P < .05$) level of significance. Where the significance value is equal or greater than ($P =>.05$) level of significance, the hypothesis is upheld, while less than ($P < .05$), it was considered rejected.

Interpretation of four-point rating scale; Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent and Not at All; Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly disagreed. Having the mean points of 3.50-4.00, 2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and 0.50-1.49 respectively

Findings

Extent of Participation of Rural Women in Vocational Training Programme in Northern Nigeria

Table 1 shows the extent of participation of rural women in the vocational training programmes in Northern Nigeria. It was revealed that women's participation in six vocational training programmes in the Table was to a low extent, with their means

ranging from 1.59 – 2.49. They participate at a high extent in 3 items with means ranging from 2.56 – 2.75. It also indicated that rural women have not participated in vocational training in cake making and decoration, and computer skills. The standard deviation of 5 items ranges from 0.01 - 0.77 each of these values was less than 1.96, indicating that the respondents mean scores were not too far from each other and were close to one another in their responses. This adds value to the reliability of the mean. The standard deviation of eight items is above 1.96, meaning that there is a divergence in their opinion.

Table 1

Rural Women Opinion on the Extent of participation in a vocational training programme in Northern Nigeria

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
Poultry production	2.56	0.08	High Extent
Cake making and decoration	1.47	0.53	Not at All
Photography	1.70	0.16	Low Extent
Fish farming	2.30	0.18	Low Extent
Makeup	1.59	0.01	Low Extent
Fashion Design	2.65	0.58	High Extent
Soap making	2.75	0.24	High Extent
Hair-dressing	1.92	0.46	Low Extent
Computer skills	1.44	0.29	Not at All
Irrigation farming	2.49	0.10	Low Extent
Cloth dyeing	1.64	0.44	Low Extent
Snacks making	2.11	0.77	Low Extent
Weighted Mean & SD	**2.05**	**0.32**	**Low Extent**

The focus group discussion on the extent of their participation in a vocational training programme reveals about six vocational training programmes which women participate in. These training programmes are entirely different from the ones listed in Table 1. More than half of the women that participated in the focus group discussions stated that they participated in food service, petty trading and shear butter production. Twenty respondents affirmed their participation in a local nail technician programme. Some women mentioned the following as their areas of the vocational training programmes; crop production, cattle rearing and goldsmithing.

Strategies of Improving Participation of Rural Women Vocational Training Programmes in Northern Nigeria?

Table 2 reveals that rural women and TVET experts strongly agreed with all items ranging from 3.54 – 3.86. The standard deviation of 11 items ranges from 0.01 - 0.32 each of these values was less than 1.96, indicating that the respondents mean scores were not too far from each other and were close to one another in their responses. This adds value to the reliability of the mean. During the focus group discussion, the participants were asked of the possible strategies of improving women's participation in vocational training programmes. Some of the women

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were of the opinion that they should be trained through formal and non-formal female skill acquisition centres. Other strategies mentioned by the women include enactment and enforcement of the laws that ban child marriage, free education and provision of adequate incentives for TVET women trainees, the establishment of policies that will favour and encourage women, and stakeholders to female-enhanced TVET programmes.

Table 2
Rural Women Opinion on the Strategies of Improving Rural Women's Participation in the Vocational Training Programmes in Northern Nigeria

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
Raising awareness among rural women and their husbands and benefits of vocational training	3.86	0.29	Strongly Agreed
Increasing the number of women trainers in order to reduce the fear of intimidation and sexual harassment from male trainers.	3.57	0.01	Strongly Agreed
Establishment of formal and non-formal women skill acquisition centres	3.60	0.09	Strongly Agreed
Provision of starter packs for women graduates of TVET centres/schools	3.76	0.28	Strongly Agreed
Provision of adequate infrastructure and facilities in the training centres	3.59	0.31	Strongly Agreed
Provision of adequate incentives for trainees.	3.75	0.14	Strongly Agreed
Provision of adequate career guidance counselling.	3.82	0.32	Strongly Agreed
Adequate training and re-training of teachers and instructors	3.54	0.11	Strongly Agreed
Encouraging women to form cooperative societies	3.61	0.17	Strongly Agreed
Enhancing women's entrepreneurship skills	3.65	0.21	Strongly Agreed
Increasing the budgetary allocation to TVET	3.56	0.23	Strongly Agreed
Weighted Mean & SD	**3.65**	**0.24**	**Strongly Agreed**

Test of Hypotheses

H_{o1}: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of women in different States in Northern Nigeria on the extent of their participation in the vocational training programmes.

To ensure that the data collected for this hypothesis met the underlying assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances, Shapiro Wilk and Levene's tests were run and the results show the values of (p=0.627) and (p=0.210), respectively. These values mean that the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances were met because the values are greater than 0.05 (P>0.05) and therefore, Analysis of Variance can be used.

Table 3

Summary of One-way Analysis of Variance of the Difference in the Mean Responses of Women in Different States in Northern Nigeria on the Extent of their Participation in the Vocational Training Programmes

States	N	Mean	SD	F-cal	Df	Sig.	Decision
Jigawa	500	1.54	0.67				
Kaduna	500	2.13	0.42				
Sokoto	500	2.02	0.47				
Kwara	500	3.	0.16	80.215	6,4491	0.000	S
Niger	500	2.46	0.27				
Plateau	500	2.42	0.24				
Bauchi	500	2.04	0.41				
Taraba	500	2.03	0.40				
Yobe	500	1.91	0.54				
Total	**4,500**	**2.23**	**0.40**				

The data presented in Table 3 reveals that the observed p-value is 0.000, is less than the fixed p-value of 0.05 (P<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of women in different States in Northern Nigeria on the extent of their participation in the vocational training programmes was rejected ($F_{(8,4491)}$ = 80.215, p<0.05). This means that there was a significant difference in the mean responses of women in different States in Northern Nigeria on the extent of their participation in the vocational training programmes. Scheffe post hoc pairwise comparison test was conducted to determine the state where the significant difference lies. The result of the test reveals that the significant difference lies in Kwara State (p=0.00), which means

that rural women in Kwara State participate more in vocational training than rural women from any other Northern States.

H_{o2}: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of experts in
TVET and women in different states in Northern Nigeria on the strategies for improving rural women's participation in the vocational training programme.

Table 4
Summary of T-test of Difference between the Mean Responses of Wxperts in TVET and Women in different states in Northern Nigeria on the Strategies for Improving rural Women's Participation in the Vocational Training Programmes

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	Sig.	Decision
Experts in TVET	213	2.54	0.58				
				0.17	4,711	0.863	NS
Rural Women	4,500	2.43	0.67				

The data in Table 4 reveals that the observed p-value is 0.863, which is higher than the fixed p-value of 0.05 (P>0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of Experts in TVET and women in different states in Northern Nigeria on the strategies for improving rural women's participation in the vocational training programmes was not rejected ($t_{24,711}$ = 0.17, P=0.863). This implies that the opinion of experts in TVET and rural women do not differ significantly.

Discussion of the Findings

Table 1 reveals that participation of rural women in vocational training was low. Majority of them were housewives and entirely depended on their husbands' income. Dokubo and Dokubo (2014) argued that women constitute the more considerable bulk of the real victim of poverty because they are generally poor, and that the occurrence of malnutrition and poor health is also gender biased in all rural communities. Women form the backbone of rural development; they can be easily engendered for meaningful change that would lead to national development. The ability for the career guidance counsellors to provide early counselling to girls on the choice of careers, will help in wrong choice of careers thereby reducing poverty. It would be agreed that having female technical education teachers as role models in schools would undoubtedly encourage girls to believe that they could follow the same path (Adelakun, Oviawe, & Barfa, 2015). Some parents believe that gender equity in industrial and technical education programmes was a result of lack of information about the profession (Kehinde & Adewuyi, 2015). Women represent a vast reservoir of untapped talent capable of transforming lives in rural areas in Nigeria. An attempt to exclude them from such training does grave injustice not

only to the women but to the entire society in which they live. Similarly, more females, both girls and adult women should be encouraged to enrol and study in institutions of agriculture and other tertiary institutions offering agriculture.

Creating awareness among rural women and other stakeholders on the importance of vocational training will play a vital role in enhancing their participation. There is an excellent opportunity of changing attitude towards participating in vocational training through awareness as it facilitates attitude change, and without the knowledge of vocational training women will continue living in poverty. Countries have adopted different strategies in order to reduce the level of poverty and to give better standards of living to its people (Hayyat & Chughtai, 2015). Survival in most rural communities requires a good knowledge of modern farming methods, which must be understood not only by men but also by women. Failure for women to gain modern farming methods would hinder agricultural development and thereby hamper rural income from growing to a level commensurate with the needs of the rural families. Rural women's access to training can have a significant impact on their potential to paticipating and benefiting from income-generating opportunities and improve their overall well-being. A variety of approaches that may be of help to them including non-formal education, technical and vocational training, agricultural extension services, workplace training, training in new technologies and literacy and numeracy training are needed to address the various challenges rural women face (Edu & Edu, 2012).

Conclusion

The role of vocational training among rural women in Northern Nigeria cannot be overemphasized because of its role in poverty alleviation and national development. The study revealed that rural women's participation in vocational training is low; this signifies that rural women in Northern Nigeria solely depend on other sources for livelihood.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on findings: Non-governmental organisations with aids from government agencies should intensify efforts in educating rural women and their households on the importance of vocational training programmes. Such awareness should be carried out in the market squares, religious meetings and other community gatherings. There is a need for vocational training institutions to increase the number of women trainers in order to reduce the fear of intimidation and any form of harassment from male trainers. Women trainers from other regions should be invited to participate in the training; they will serve as role models.

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