

## **Adult Education as a Tool for Rural Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment among the Gokana People of Rivers State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The study identified the role of adult education in achieving rural women's socio-economic empowerment among the Gokana people of Rivers State in Nigeria. Thirty two (32) respondents consisting of 26 secondary school agriculture teachers and 6 extension agents as a census were drawn and studied. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire containing structured items. Data analysis used frequency counts and the mean. Based on the data collected and analyzed, it was found out that training for increased tuber crops production, training for early season vegetable production, training on oil palm processing, training in agric marketing, entrepreneurship education, workshop on profit maximization, business seminar for petty trades and training of tailors and hair dressers were agreed upon by the respondents as ways adult education could help enhance economic empowerment of rural women among the Gokana people. It was also found out that capacity building in human rights awareness and protection, capacity building in crime prevention, capacity building in healthy eating and living, mass mobilization and awakening of the critical consciousness of the women, welfare and self-help education, and capacity building for democracy were all agreed upon by the respondents as ways adult education can help enhance social emancipation of women, among others, the study therefore recommended that rural women should be given unlimited access to adult education and training in order to enhance their socio-economic empowerment.*

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**Keywords:** *Adult Education, Rural Women, Socio-economic empowerment, capacity building, Gokana*

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### **Introduction**

Women play significant roles in the economic development of any nation be it developing or developed. The economic contribution of women has been recognized worldwide as it was reported that women produce half of the food in some parts of the developing countries (Adesanya, 2011). This socio-economic role of women was earlier reported by Jazairy, Alamgir and Penuccio (1992) that rural women are the major food producers in developing countries who generate a large part of the family's cash income. According to Jazairy *et al*, in many African countries, rural women account for 60 percent of the agricultural labour force and up to 80 percent of total food production. The role of women in the work force and, therefore, in the economic development of Nigeria, has been one of great significance.

In the light of this, Mbabazi and Lilian (2015) observed that women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families than their male counterparts. Yet there is a great temptation as well as manifest tendency to overlook and sweep these economic contributions of women under the carpet. Apart from being mothers taking care of the domestic sector, women farmed alongside their husbands and children and were dominant in trade and

distribution through a network of local and distant markets (Yesufu, 1996). In pre-colonial Nigeria, according to Yesufu, women led in some local crafts and industry such as cloth weaving, pottery making and food processing. While, like today, men cut the palm fruit and its processing for palm oil and kernels devolved mainly on the women. Indeed, Effa-Attoe cited in Yesufu added that in pre-colonial Nigeria, a woman who was without a craft or trade, or who was totally dependent on her husband was not only rare, but was regarded with contempt. The manifest tendency of discrimination suffered by women under the colonial Nigeria was derived essentially from prevailing cultural norms. In Yesufu's submission, the enactment of a law precluding women from inheriting land merely legalized the social system which was predominantly matrilineal. Thus, although rural women in developing countries account for 60 percent of the agricultural labour force and up to 80 percent of total food production, these rural women constitute the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world (Jazairy *et al*, 1992). Thus, the international community has been expressing very vocal concern about the relative debility under which women are alleged to live and work all over the world. Special attention is focused on the underdeveloped countries where it is felt that women suffer most. An instrument for the identification and analysis of the resources of any nation, as well as seeking to provide solutions to, or amelioration of, the problems and impediments that beset the people in practically all their endeavours which is education – is therefore necessary.

This instrument which will develop the capacity of women according to Orlukwu (2019) has such components as skill training, enlightenment and mobilization programmes, empowerment programmes, workers education, on-the-job training, apprenticeship programmes and extension programmes all geared towards women empowerment and emancipation. All these programmes in unequivocal terms fall under the umbrella of adult education.

As Orlukwu posited, women's empowerment means increasing women's authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect their lives. As women exercise real choice, they are empowered having the capacity to deal with matters affecting their lives economically, politically, socially, spiritually and otherwise (Akanbi & Jekayinga, 2011). Empowerment programmes are therefore meant to translate to socio-economic development through improved income, improved basic needs and security, improved quality of life, and higher political awareness and participation. But the investigator could not locate any micro-level study focused on adult education as a tool for rural women's socio-economic empowerment among the Gokana people to either validate or falsify. This study was therefore planned to examine the role adult education can play in achieving rural women socio-economic empowerment among the Gokana people with the following objectives.

1. To find out the ways through which adult education can enhance economic empowerment of rural women in Gokana.
2. To ascertain the ways through which adult education can enhance the social emancipation of rural women in Gokana.

### **Methodology**

The study covered Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State as a people. The study adopted a census of 26 secondary school agriculture teachers and 6 extension agents in the study area supplied by Rivers State Post Primary Schools Board, and Rivers State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) respectively. A census is appropriate here because the population is such that the researcher can handle therefore, there was no sampling but the entire population was used. Data were collected by the use of validated questionnaire containing structured items. Copies of the questionnaire were administered personally by the researcher and retrieved on the spot in the respective secondary schools, and fortnightly training sessions at the Bori Zonal Office of the Rivers State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). The

respondents rated on a 4-point summated rating scale of agreement. Data analysis used frequency counts and the mean. Using a criterion mean of 2.55 decision was reached on each table item by item.

## Result and Discussions

### Research Questions 1:

What are the ways through which adult education can enhance economic empowerment of rural women in Gokana?

**Table 1: Ways through which Adult Education can enhance Economic Empowerment of Rural women in Gokana**

S/No	Ways Adult Education can enhance Economic Empowerment of Rural Women	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Training for increased tuber crops production.	2.67	Accept
2	Training for early season vegetable production.	3.01	Accept
3	Farmers training in pineapple production	2.23	Reject
4	Training in snail rearing	2.35	Reject
5	Farmers training in homestead fish pond	2.05	Reject
6	Training on oil palm processing.	3.01	Accept
7	Vocational training in agric marketing	2.71	Accept
8	Entrepreneurship education	2.56	Accept
9	Workshop on profit maximization of market women	2.66	Accept
10	Business training for market women petty traders	2.65	Accept
11	Vocational training for improvement of village level women tailors	2.81	Accept
12	Workers training for improvement of village level women hair dressers	2.55	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows a consensus agreement on training for increased tuber crops production, training for early season vegetable production, training on oil palm processing, training in agric marketing, entrepreneurship education, workshop on profit maximization, business seminar for petty traders and training of tailors and hair dressers as ways adult education can help enhance economic empowerment of rural women in Gokana.

The findings here on training to increase productivity agrees with the results of Deekor (2018) who reported high level of impact of training on productivity of rural farmers, and as productivity increase, economic status also increases. The findings here is also in line with Orlukwu (2019) who found out that education development programmes increased women socio-economic status.

### Research Question 2

What are the ways through which Adult Education can enhance the Social Emancipation of Rural Women in Gokana?

**Table 2: Ways Adult education can enhance the social emancipation of rural women in Gokana**

N = 32			
S/No	Ways adult education can enhance social emancipation of rural women	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Capacity building in human right awareness creation and protection.	2.82	Accept
2	Capacity building in crime prevention.	3.48	Accept
3	Capacity building in healthy eating.	3.00	Reject
4	Capacity building in healthy living and hygiene	3.23	Reject
5	Mass mobilization	2.85	Reject
6	Awakening of critical consciousness to the reality of one's existence	3.10	Accept
7	Welfare education	2.65	Accept
8	Self-help education	2.75	Accept
9	Capacity building for democracy	3.46	Accept

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019

The above table 2 shows that all the 9 items studied were agreed upon by the respondents as ways through which Adult Education can enhance the social emancipation of rural women. Specifically, capacity building in human rights awareness and protection, capacity building in crime prevention, capacity building in healthy eating and living, mass mobilization and awakening of critical consciousness of the women, welfare and self-help education, and capacity building for democracy were all agreed upon by respondents as ways adult education can help enhance social emancipation of women.

These findings on human rights and crime prevention corroborates positions of other scholars. Emmert and Eur (2011) asked: how shall I claim a right when I do not know that I have a right? Suggestive of human right awareness creation through media education which is a lifelong process of adult education. Ihejirika (2012) also agrees with this in his position that Adult and non-formal education programmes could be used to empower women socially, economically, and politically. This also corroborates Orlukwu (2019) that development programmes improved the healthy eating, dieting and healthy living of women in Port Harcourt.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the use of adult education is one sure way to enhancing the socio-economic empowerment of rural women through capacity building making rural women better producers and better actors of matters affecting their lives. It was therefore recommended that rural women should be given unlimited access to Adult education and training in order to enhance their socio-economic empowerment.

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