

Influence of Non-Formal Education Programmes on Women Participation in Community Development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State

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DOI: 10.56201/jbae.v11.no2.2025.pg1.12

Abstract

This study examined influence of non-formal education programmes on women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Three research objectives, and three research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study was 252 which comprised 94 female learners in the registered adult education centers in Bonny and 158 female learners in the registered adult education centers in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The census approach was adopted to accommodate the entire population of the study as sample because it was a manageable size. The instrument for data collection was a closed-ended structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Non-formal Education Programmes on Women Participation in Community Development Process Questionnaire" (INEPWPCDPQ). The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study, while Cronbach Alpha Statistic Method was used to establish the reliability coefficient (r) value of 0.66. The responses from the three research questions were analyzed with descriptive statistics such as Mean and Standard Deviation Statistic. The findings from the study revealed that that non-formal education programmes such as political education, leadership education, and basic literacy programmes influence women participation in community development to a high extent. The study recommended among others that Non-formal adult education programmes should be taken serious by government at all levels, NGOs and other development agencies to breach the development gape in our communities.

Key Words: *Non-Formal Education, Programmes, Women Participation, Community Development*

INTRODUCTION

The need for women participation in community development is very important and cannot be over stated. Women Participation in the process is very relevant in advancing rural development, and it is very important because, according to Otamiri, Nwoye and Igoni (2020), no nation can be seen as developed, until her rural communities are developed and connected to her national development both in infrastructure and human capacity building. The need, value and importance of development depend on the growth of man hence the attainment of development of rural communities rely on the participation of the community inhabitants which include women. However, Ogbonna (2018), describe women as the “adult female human beings”, and further stated that right from creation, woman is acknowledged as a companion to a man. In the views of Ikimalo (2013), men have ruled the world and missed the opportunity to use the numerical strength and complimentary role of women to enhance sustainable community development. He further noted that in communities, parents are more likely to send their male children to school than the women, mostly when the resources are scarce. Corroborating the above assertion, Harrison (2012), noted that an educated woman will be able to take better care of her health, that of the family, and contribute to both community and national wealth creation. This positive result on generations to come reduces poverty and boosts community development. From the above statement, it means that educating women is one of the potent investments any community or nation can make.

Community development entails the mobilization of every community members which includes women to participate both in the need identification, planning and implementation process of caring out projects like building of markets schools, health centers, water projects, town halls among others. These indicate that women are supposed to be involved or participating actively in community development process. According to Oguonu (2010), since the development of the communities is usually the government’s single most important concerned activities at every given time, the economic advancement of these communities cannot fully take place if women are not actively involved in the process and activities of development in the communities. Ndukwe, as cited in Alozie (2011), posits that experts agree that the best and perhaps the only way to promote community development in Africa is to orientate it towards people living in the rural areas which women have the greater population. Involving women actively in attending progressive development in communities has been a serious issue of concern since the United Nations arranged the first women’s forum in Mexico in 1995 (Bird, Obura, Gheradi, Wallace and Banos-Smith (2015). The inability of women to participate actively in all capacities and process of development in communities is a problem that calls for great concern not just among women rights activists but also in regional and international organizations causing pressures for interventions to be put in place in the form of policies.

Community development, as an all inclusive grassroot process, involves the interaction of the people to achieve their needs. This involves promoting relationship among community members and those in position of authority, initiators of development projects or programmes in such a way that everyone will be involved in issues that are of great concern to all. In this regard, community development can be seen as a movement that is focused on improving the livelihood of rural dwellers towards advancing and sustaining development at the community levels. According to Otamiri (2016), non involvement of people in the development process usually results in lack of ownership and sustainability of development programmes he further stated that It is an activity

that empowers community members to create strong and more connected communities. The above assertion, justify community development activity as democratic in nature and the process should allow equal participation of community members including the women in implementation of development activities.

However, ZimStat as cited in Okeke (2019) assert that the power relations that shape social, political, economic and cultural life prevent women from participating fully in all aspects of their lives, both at home and in public or community. In the same vein, Bird, Obura, Gherardi, Wallace, and Banos-Smith (2018), acknowledged that the low participation of women in community development process in most communities could be attributed to lack of equal educational opportunity and skill development compared to men, cultural approaches and responsibility to family. This implies that men are given more preference in educational opportunities than the women and culturally women are not allowed to take part in certain issues that affect the entire community. Similarly, Njenga (2013) stated that the issue of women not being actively involved in community development process in communities could also be attributed to government policies, administrative structures, poor educational background, lack of capacity building, financial control, societal culture and poor development planning. Corroborating the above assertions, Kurebwe (2017) noted that political and traditional institutions have neglected the importance of women participation in the development of communities and still promote certain believe that women do not have the capacity to actively involved in community development process. He further noted that promoting women involvement in community development process requires their participation in non-formal education programmes that will empower them with the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed for active participation.

According to UNESCO in Zertuche (2016), Non-formal education is any organized systematic learning activity that is usually done outside the framework of the formal school system to provide a selected type of learning to particular group of people which could be adult's women, youths or children. Non-formal education in this regard, is very relevant and can be seen as a strategy for empowering women towards contributing to the development of their communities through its myriads of programmes designed to improve the capacity of women in all aspect of life to address issues of women neglect in community development process. Non-formal education programmes deals with planned diverse educational activities that are geared towards educating and empowering women with functional skills, and knowledge required to earn a better living, and to integrate women into community development processes in carrying out development programmes/projects in the communities. Some of these non-formal education programmes include; functional literacy programme, political education programme, and leadership training programme.

It is believed that the involvement of women in these specific non-formal education programmes improves their capacity to participate actively in community development activities. It is against this background that this study was designed to examine the influence of non-formal education programmes on women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The need for women involvement in community development process for community advancement cannot be over emphasized. But it was observed that in communities in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State women opinion are not being consulted in the choice of projects in communities, they are excluded in the community deliberation, decision making, planning and implementation of community projects. These neglects affect women active involvement in development activities in the communities. However, a well implemented non-formal education programme is expected to provide the women with the knowledge, skills and value required to tackle the problem of illiteracy, poverty, gender discrimination and certain cultural barriers that limit women active participation in development process. To achieve this, considerable efforts have been made by governments and other agencies to establish non-formal adult education centres in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State through its myriads of programme which include political education, and leadership training programme, functional literacy programme, among others. The need to bring these non-formal education programmes to the fore and also show how they enable women to participate actively in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State, was the problem of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the influence of non-formal education programmes on women participation in community development process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. In specific terms, the objectives of the study are to:

1. find out the extent to which political education programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.
2. examine the extent to which leadership training programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.
3. ascertain the extent to which functional literacy programme influence women participation in community development Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does political education programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.?
2. To what extent does leadership training programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State?
3. To what extent does functional literacy programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study was 252 which comprised 94 female learners in the registered adult education centers in Bonny and 158 female learners in the registered adult education centers in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State (Source: Rivers State Agency for Adult and Non-formal Education Register, 2023). The census approach was adopted to accommodate the entire population of the study as sample because it was a manageable size, representing 100% of the population. The instrument for data collection was a closed-ended structured questionnaire titled “Influence of Non-formal Education Programmes on Women Participation in Community Development Process Questionnaire” (INPWPCDPQ). The questionnaire was structured in a four (4)-point scale rating on Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3) Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1). The reliability of the instrument for each cluster of items was determined through a pilot study of Twenty (15) respondents outside the study population. After which, the instrument was retrieved and analyzed with Cronbach Alpha statistic method to establish the total reliability index of 0.66., which indicated that the instrument was reliable. Out of the 252 copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents, 10 copies were not retrieved, while only 242 copies which include 152 copies from female learners in registered adult education centers in Obio/Akpor and 90 copies from female adult learners in registered adult education centers in Bonny Local Government area of Rivers State were retrieved. Though, 7 copies were wrongly filled and discarded, while 235 which include 150 copies from female learners in Obio/Akpor study centers, and 85 copies from Bonny study centers were correctly filled and used for the analysis. The data collected were summarized in tables to reflect the views of the respondents, and further analyzed with Mean (\bar{x}) Statistic and Standard Deviation. Since the items were rated on a modified four (4) point scale, the average mean for answering the research questions was arrived at finding the average of the 4 points scale hence: $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10/4 = 2.5$. Therefore, items whose mean (\bar{x}) scores were less than 2.50, were seen as Low Extent response, while those that have Mean (\bar{x}) scores of 2.50 and above, were seen as High Extent responses.

Results

The results from the study were presented as follows:

Research Question 1: To what extent does political education programme influence women participation in community development process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Female Adult Learners on the Extent that Political Education Programme Influence Women Participation in Community Development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State

S/N	Statement Items	Female Learners Obio/Akpor LGA n=150		Remarks	Female Learners Bonny LGA n= 85		Remarks
		Mean	Std.		Mean	Std.	
1	Political education programme has improved my civic responsibility and awareness to participation in the process of community need assessment	2.46	0.72	Low Extent	2.67	0.97	High Extent
2	Voting right education has improved my knowledge on my right to vote for felt need projects during project selection in the community	2.93	0.75	High Extent	2.78	0.89	High Extent
3	Political awareness has raised my consciousness to participate in community leadership positions to promote development projects	2.84	0.77	High Extent	2.83	0.82	High Extent
4	Political literacy has enhanced my involvement in decision making during project implementation in the community	2.73	0.63	High Extent	2.76	0.89	High Extent
5	Improved my attitude to work with others in building process of a peaceful community	2.80	0.87	High Extent	2.81	0.87	High Extent
	Grand Total	2.75	0.75	High Extent	2.77	0.89	High Extent

Source: Research's Field Result, 2023

Table 1 above for research question one shows the mean response of female adult learners on the extent to which political education programme influence women participation in community development process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Item 1 has mean scores of 2.46 and 2.67, standard deviation of 0.72 and 0.97. Item 2 has mean scores of 2.93 and 2.78, standard deviation of 0.75 and 0.89. Item 3 has mean scores of 2.84 and 2.83, standard deviation of 0.77 and 0.82. Item 4 has mean scores of 2.73 and 2.76, standard deviation of 0.63 and 0.89. Item 5 has mean scores of 2.80 and 2.81, standard deviation of 0.87 and 0.87. The grand mean of 2.75 and 2.77 was recorded. This indicates that the respondents were of the opinions that to a high extent, political education programme influence women participation in community development process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does leadership training programme influence women participation in community development process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Female Adult Learners on the Extent that leadership training Programme Influence Women Participation in Community Development Process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State

S/N	Statement	Female Adult Learners in Obio/Akpor LGA n=150		Remarks	Female Adult Learners in Bonny LGA n=85		Remarks
		Mean	Std. deviation		Mean	Std. deviation	
6.	Participation in leadership training programme enables community members with knowledge required to make an informed decision in community affairs	2.84	0.93	High Extent	2.84	0.86	High Extent
7.	leadership training programme expose community members to team-building spirit and communication skills to participate in community development projects	2.82	0.86	High Extent	2.76	0.85	High Extent
8.	Participation in leadership training programme promote self awareness on what is right or wrong while working with others in community affairs	2.81	0.86	High Extent	2.84	0.86	High Extent
9.	leadership training programme expose community members to problem solving skills to take responsibilities on crisis management in the community	2.96	0.82	High Extent	2.79	0.83	High Extent
10.	Leadership training programme improves self confidence and moral values to become better leader in policy making process	2.65	0.83	High Extent	2.81	0.85	High Extent
	Grand total	2.82	0.83	High Extent	2.81	0.85	High Extent

Source: Research's Field Result, 2023

Table 2 above confirmed the mean responses of female adult learners on the extent to which leadership training programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Item 6 has mean scores of 2.84 and 2.84, standard deviation of 0.93 and 0.86. Item 7 has mean scores of 2.82 and 2.76, standard deviation of 0.86 and 0.85. Item 8 has mean scores of 2.81 and 2.84, standard deviation of 0.86

and 0.85. Item 9 has mean scores of 2.96 and 2.79, standard deviation of 0.82 and 0.83. Item 10 has mean scores of 2.65 and 2.81, standard deviation of 0.83 and 0.87. The grand mean of 2.82 and 2.81 recorded it indicated that the respondents shared strong opinion that to a high extent, leadership training programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Research Question 3: To what extent does basic literacy programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Female Adult Learners on the Extent that Basic literacy Programme Influence Women Participation in Community Development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State

S/N	Statement	Items	Female Adult Learners in Obio/Akpor LGA n=150		Remarks	Female Adult Learners in Bonny LGA n=85		Remarks
			Mean	Std.		Mean	Std.	
11	Participation in literacy activity has helped me discover the need to be involved in identification of felt needs projects to be carried out in my community		2.43	0.87	Low Extent	2.81	0.84	High Extent
12	has stimulated my interest to be actively involved in the planning of community development activities		2.75	0.85	High Extent	2.83	0.85	High Extent
13	improved my reading ability for business to raise fund to assist in community development activities		2.57	0.87	High Extent	2.56	1.11	High Extent
14	Exposed me to the knowledge and skills required for deliberation during meetings between external bodies and community members on a particular project to be carried out		2.71	0.80	High Extent	2.80	0.85	High Extent
15	improved my communication skills for public relations in the implementation process of community development activities		2.80	0.76	High Extent	2.39	1.04	Low Extent
	Grand total		2.65	0.83	High Extent	2.68	0.94	High Extent

Source: Research's Field Result, 2023

Table 3 shows the mean response of female adult learners on the extent to basic literacy programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Item 11 has mean scores of 2.43 and 2.81, standard deviation of 0.87 and 0.84. Item 12 has mean scores of 2.75 and 2.83, standard deviation of 0.85 and 0.85. Item 13 has mean scores of 2.57 and 2.56, standard deviation of 0.87 and 1.11. Item 14 has mean scores of 2.71 and 2.80, standard deviation of 0.80 and 0.85. Item 15 has mean scores of 2.80 and 2.39, standard deviation of 0.76 and 1.04. The grand mean of 2.65 and 2.68 recorded, indicates that female adult learners shared strong opinion that to a high extent, basic literacy programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study in research question 1 indicated that to a high extent, political education programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State as evidenced in items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 with grand mean of 2.75 and 2.78 respectively, indicating that Political education programme has improved women civic responsibility and awareness to participation in the process of community need assessment, improved women's knowledge on their right to vote for felt need projects during project selection in the community, raised women consciousness to participate in community leadership positions to promote development projects, raised women consciousness to participate in community leadership positions to promote development projects, enhanced women capacity of involving in decision making during project implementation in the community, and improved women attitude to work with others in building process of a peaceful community. This finding was affirmed in the result of hypothesis 1 which revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of female adult learners in adult education centers on the extent that political education programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

The finding in this research question 1 is related to the findings of Etigbomere and Akpobomere (2020), that education promote women participation in politics, bring about improved living conditions of the rural dwellers, that women political participation also bring about empowerment of women and infrastructural development in the communities. They however find that low level of education and awareness affects women rights for political participation. The finding in this research question one also relate to the finding of Ebeye (2021), that raising women political consciousness through political education programmes, help to motivate their participation in community development projects. It also corroborate with the position of Patrick (2013) that political education programmes promote the knowledge of constitutional rights, duties, moral ethical principles, patriotism, tolerance and social responsibility among community inhabitants.

Findings of the study in research question 2 indicated that to a high extent, leadership training programme influence women participation in community development in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State hence Participation in leadership training programme

enables community members with knowledge required to make an informed decision in community affairs, expose community members to team-building spirit and communication skills to participate in community development projects, promote self awareness on what is right or wrong while working with others in community affairs, expose community members to problem solving skills to take responsibilities on crisis management in the community, and improves self confidence and moral values to become better leader in policy making process. This finding was affirmed by the hypothesis 2 result which revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of female adult learners in adult education centers on the extent that leadership training programme influence women participation in community development process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

This finding is in agreement with the discovery of Otamiri (2021), that leadership training programme equip individuals with knowledge required to make an informed decision in community affairs, promote communication skills, self awareness, problem solving skills among others. This implies that preparing community members for leadership position through leadership training programme is key for promoting community members active participation in community development activities.

The findings from the study in Table 3 research question 3 revealed that to a high extent, Participation in basic literacy activity helps women to discover the need to be involved in identification of felt needs projects, stimulate interest of community members to be actively involved in the planning of community development projects, improves community members reading ability for business to raise fund to assist in community development project, and improves individuals communication skills for public relations in the implementation process of community development projects. The result in hypothesis 3 confirmed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of female adult learners in adult education centers on the extent that functional literacy programme influence women participation in community development process in Obio/Akpor and Bonny Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

However, The findings of the study is in line with the findings of Akaraka (2015), that functional literacy programme has functional impacts on the lives of the rural women which include their family life, trades and community development roles and so on.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that non-formal education programmes such as political education, leadership education, and functional literacy, programmes influence women participation in community development process to a high extent. This implies that education particularly non-formal education programmes plays critical roles in empowering women with knowledge and capacity to compete favourably with men in any process that will bring about sustainable development if given the opportunity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Ministry of Women Affairs in collaboration with Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), National Orientation Agency (NOA), political parties, NGOs, among others should embark on regular political education programmes to conscientize women on the need for their active participation in politics as to promote good governance and development of communities.
2. That Government at all levels in collaboration with coalition of civil society organizations should engage community members in leadership training programme to equip them with skills and knowledge required in leadership to enable them become better leaders to promote community development.
3. That functional literacy programme should be adopted, and planned by government, NGOs, and other development agencies as a means of educating and empowering women to promote community development
4. Non-formal adult education programmes should be taken serious by government at all levels, NGOs and other development agencies to breach the development gap in our communities.

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