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## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG WOMEN IN JOS, PLATEAU STATE: THE PLACE OF SKILL ACQUISITION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Women are noted globally as the main support for socio-economic development; and in Nigeria, women constitute a large portion of the population. However, women have been continually marginalized from many spheres of life, even as they face challenges of lack of education, low financial empowerment, and cultural norms that limit their participation in economic activities. This is seen in the visible disparity in socio-economic and political status of women in the country. Although some progress has been recorded in the last decade on efforts to address the challenges faced by women in Nigeria, more is still desired in the fight for women's skill acquisition and inclusion in key decision-making processes. This has often sparked insightful debates across Nigeria, as advocates call for involvement of more women in the country's socio-economic development affairs. Consequently, this paper probed the problem of skill acquisition and socio-economic development of women in Jos, Plateau State, including challenges and prospects. Using the Rostow theory, which advocates for gender equality in socio-economic participation to enhance growth, this paper analyzed the challenges and achievements of women in socio-economic development, using secondary data sourced from journals, books, the internet, etc. The study concludes that women inclusion in socio-economic development will promote socio-economic dividends and growth in Jos in particular, and Nigeria in general.*

**Keywords:** Rostow's theory, self-sufficiency, socio-economic development, skill acquisition

### **INTRODUCTION**

As part of a strategy to involve more women in development efforts, women are being organized for social and economic advancement and self-sufficiency. When it comes to the domestic sphere, the agricultural sector, and the international economy, rural African women are indispensable. They are growing in stature and influence in the country and the world as a result of their development efforts.

In recent years, there have been a number of conferences devoted to problems that women all across the developing world, including those in Nigeria, face. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFM), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Millennium Declaration are just a few. These groups have passed made declarations and rules that are aimed at making it easier for women to break into the workforce; they are united in a strategic posture to empower women economically and socially and improve their quality of life.

Individuals and groups improve their self-sufficiency through skills acquired by training with others. Skills prepare people for work in a variety of fields, with the trainer and learner entering

into a legally binding contract outlining the terms (duration, content, and delivery) of the training. Ochiagha (2015) defines skill as “the demonstration of habitual thinking and acting in a particular manner when performing a task.” The development of a skill confers the ability to perform tasks. Learning the proper thought patterns, emotion, and action is necessary to perform a task enables individuals to cultivate talents that provide intellectual, emotional, and moral benefits (Ochiagha, 2015).

People learn new skills when they receive instruction that bring their ideas and expertise to life (Donli, 2014). Having the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and abilities to support oneself economically, make individuals more appealing to prospective employers; and expanding one's horizons through education leads to an increase in both individual competitiveness and group cohesiveness. However, acquiring new knowledge requires several abilities (Magbagbeola, 2016). It is important to blend academic and practical knowledge to make work easier.

Guidelines for maintaining a skill improvement programme includes (1) providing instruction that leads directly to employable abilities in a target field; (2) expertise in a particular trade is distinguished from expertise in others by a set of specialised skills; (3) teachers in educational institutions should be highly qualified professionals with extensive expertise in their fields (4) there are several qualities and characteristics that must be present in order to learn a new skill successfully; (5) training should be conducted in a way that benefits trainees, employers, imitation, and innovative thought (6) attitude, customer interactions, productivity, efficiency, supply and demand, and other guiding principles of training in a specific sector are crucial to grasp (7) creative solutions used must prioritize women's education and economic empowerment. The benefit of these guidelines is that, it encourages the application of existing expertise to the generation of novel commercial concepts.

Women's population of 68.3 million constitutes almost half of the entire country's population of 198 million (National Population Commission, projected, 2021). This numerical strength has not been translated into equal treatment in society. Apart from numerical strength, women have great potentials to evolve a new economic order, thereby helping in accelerating social and political development and consequently transforming the society into a better one. In Nigeria, women are generally the most neglected, and have consistently lost out in the course of development and self-reliance. This situation is worse for rural women. Based on this situation, the Lagos Plan of Action for Economic Development of Africa, in line with the UN Charter, advocates that the needs, rights, and concerns of all women be fully incorporated into individual country's development planning to benefit all sectors of the population.

Omoredede (2018) assessed the role and impact of organisations and NGOs on the development of rural women in Nigeria with particular reference to Edo State. The study adopted the participatory development framework in its analysis. The research identified various income generating activities of rural women to include; agricultural produce, marketing of farm produce, crafts making and food processing. It was found that despite all the efforts women put into development, their capacities are not optimally utilized due to socio-cultural and political hindrances such as access to land, loans, education, and other outputs.

Other hindrances are gender issues, which lead to marginalization and non-inclusion of women in top decision-making positions. The paper concluded that organizing women is an integral aspect of the socio-economic advancement of any nation. It was stressed that women's efforts would be optimally utilized for socio-economic development, which will consequently lead to self-reliance if they are empowered socially, culturally, politically, and economically.

Women in Jos, Plateau state are often left out of development efforts, despite the fact that they not only care for their families but also undertake the selling of farm produce, and engage in a variety of petty trading that help to strengthen the families' financial footing. The failure of government and society to organize women in Jos to attain socioeconomic growth and self-sufficiency is, therefore, at the heart of this study. Specifically, the study opts to determine the extent to which skill acquisition programmes in fashion designing and agriculture (fisheries) impact socio-economic development of women's in Jos, and enhance their standard of living. The following hypotheses guided the study:

The study took a qualitative approach and analyzed existing data method to find answers to how skills acquisition relates to socio-economic development of women. The study takes a cue from the work of Emile Durkheim who popularized the qualitative approach. Essentially, this study focuses on skill acquisition and socio-economic development of women in Jos, Plateau State. Skill acquisition is the independent variable, while socio-economic development is the dependent variable, and is looked at from the perspectives of agricultural labour force and entrepreneurial skills and key pillar of employment generation (Roberts, 2015).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Theoretical Framework: Modernization Theory**

According to Rostow's (1960) economic modernization theory, the superiority and desirability of western-styled modernization and growth presume that all countries will grow from a traditional to modern society, following the same path of development similar to those of already experienced by "advanced western nations." For third world nations, however, some scholars such as McClelland (1961), Hagen (1962), and Lewis (1966) argued that the contrary is the case, as third world nations are riddled with numerous constraints and structural bottlenecks such as traditionalism, low savings, a high population, and low achievements.

Infusion of foreign aid, investment and technological assistance deemed necessary for growth, with expectation that this growth will trickle down to all strata of the economy was constrained. In practice, the development paradigm as a growth paradigm resulted in the paradox of apparent growing wealth and greater poverty. This inadequacy of growth paradigm to tackle third-world underdevelopment led to a search for alternative strategies (Eshiet, 2006).

Eshiet (2006) argue that the 1970s witnessed a shift in conceptualization of development from capital centeredness to people's centeredness, because capital centeredness had hitherto either bypassed people in its concern to build physical structures. Though physical development is important, it is argued that it must be approached in a manner that enable people play a central role in, and control over it Oakley, 1991; Fulglesang and Chandler, 1986; Bhasin, 1985; Galjart, 1981).

**Concept of Skill Acquisition**

A skills acquisition is the educating, training or imparting and assimilating abilities, behaviours and expertise required to perform given tasks. Ibrahim (2013) said that it is an education where skills are taught to get a job through practical experience for self-improvement. Skills acquisition in traditional Nigerian societies is often done through apprenticeship. Inyang and Agwadu (2017) states that apprenticeship training system began as part of a larger education process in which indigenous societies passed on their cultural traditions from generation to generation.

Ibrahim (2013) argue that skills acquisition is education that helps people learn how to work in industries, agriculture, and other fields that need skilled people. There are many different kinds of skills one can learn (directly or indirectly) in a skills acquisition programme, and which can one's job roles or community service. Olaitan (2015) emphasizes vocational skills that imbue in trainees, the skills, attitudes, interests, and knowledge about different fields. Vocational skills help people make a living, hence, Agbogo and Azih (2015) argue that education that develops a technician is technical education, while education that develops a worker is all-encompassing because it prepares them to get a job.

Skills acquisition programmes are a series of controlled and organized experiences that are meant to improve peoples' employability or enable them employ themselves and create jobs for others. In general, a skills acquisition programmes teach specialised knowledge and skills that make a trainee more qualified; and this is the main point of every skills acquisition programme.

In 1981, Nigeria's National Policy on Education was changed to make it clear that vocational education is a type of education that helps students learns how to do things in the real world and how to do things scientifically. Okoro (2019) states that skills acquisition programmes are the ways people learn how to be good at what they want do. Skills acquisition programmes can be planned and organized, or they can be haphazard.

**Concept of Development**

Igwe and Ateke (2018) provides that development is a process that results in improved quality of life and which ensures that everyone has access to basic necessities of life; and the opportunity to make choices. To Nwulu and Ateke (2014), development is a growth process that enable society meet specific economic growth and human development requirements, including health, education, and clean environment by systematically employing technical knowledge. Thus, development means change or planned social, political, and economic development growth. Riggs (1976) it is the process of increasing the autonomy (discretion) of a social system, using levels of diffraction. Tewe (1978) suggest that development policy must include (1) creation of a general condition of development; (2) awareness of development potentialities and advantages; (3) basic government instrument; (4) take steps to encourage and facilitate private activity; and (5) development of policy under varying circumstances.

Hitherto, development has been a measure of per capita income and growth. Now, growth could be sectoral or peripheral. In a wider sense, development should consist of higher production, better distribution, and greater social justice." The basic drive of development ought is to harness and mobilize human development. It could be achieved by helping the poor, the marginalized, and the rural poor by providing them with enhanced opportunities and access to resources for productive self-employment, income generation, and better lives while strengthening the asset

base and livelihood of the economically challenged population. By implication, we build target communities into active and economically self-sufficient units.

Abdullahi (2017) argued that development implies an increase in capacity, expansion, and blossoming, or an "increment, improvement, or progression." Development, in common usage, means "growth," "change," or "planned growth." The term "development" may apply to diverse perspectives, such as social development, political development, or administrative development. Several developments are directed toward a higher and better standard of living through industrialization and modernization. This is particularly true with economic development.

### **Skill Acquisition and Socio-Economic Development**

Women in rural Jos, Plateau State, are not economically self-sufficient because they mostly work on subsistence farms and do small businesses with little or no skill. Women who live in rural areas do not have the skills to improve their socio-economic lives, which has made them earn less and put them in a lower-class group in society. Many rural women in Jos are poor because they do not have access to better ways to make money. These people are mostly local yam farmers (mampa which is seasonal), stone breakers, petty traders (vegetables), workers at construction site, etc.

In an effort to improve the lives of people in Jos, Plateau State, mostly women and young people, the wives of each of the state's governors have been giving people different skills-training programs. These skill-building programmes in fashion design and fishing are supposed to help participants become more self-sufficient and independent. In addition, there are programmes that teach women to make liquid soap and sanitary products, decoration, catering, etc.

Also, wives of local government chairmen and caretaker committee chairmen have organized skill-building programmes help people learn new skills, especially, at the grassroots. Hence, over the year, women in the Jos, Plateau State have learned skills in fashion design, event planning, cosmetology, catering, and baking that should make them more productive and improve their standard of living. Through the different skills learned, these women ought to become more self-sufficient and economically sound to deal with problems in their own homes and also help their communities and society as a whole.

Rural women generally, face myriad socio-economic challenges that negatively effects individuals' livelihood and socio-economic activities. These include, but are not limited to, lack of education, cultural norms, financial empowerment, etc. As socio-economic activities are known to affect and shape humanity, this study will discuss below three key challenges resulting from the existence and development achievements of the women in Jos Plateau State.

Previous empirical studies show that skills acquisition programmes improves socio-economic development of peoples and societies. Daniel and Biola (2019) showed that women participation in fish processing improves their socio-economic standing, and identified age, education, income, access to credit, household size, and access to market as factors that affect women's participation in fish processing and packaging. The study showed that these factors positively relate to women participation in fish processing and packaging.



Olabisi and Tawo (2020) investigated the influence of catering and agricultural skills acquisition programmes on participation of women in community development projects in Eket and Onna Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. The study revealed that catering and agricultural skills acquisition programmes significantly enhance women's participation in community development projects. The recommends that government should introduce appropriate technology that will help processing grains, preserving fruits and vegetables, and storing harvested products.

Ataije and Ihejirika (2020) looked at how women in the Andoni Local Government Area, Rivers State, and thought skills-training programmes helped them grow economically and socially. The findings show that skills acquisition programmes impact the socio-economic lives by giving them life-changing skills that made them more self-reliant and made women more socially accepted. The study also found that socio-economic lives of women in the area of study have changed. Based on their findings, the researchers said that any skills acquisition programme for socio-economic development of women should be an integrated programme that not only gives them the skills they need to make a living but also give them the confidence to want to improve their lives.

Usoro (2016) observe that failure of Nigeria's higher educational institutions is hinged on their products' (graduates) lack of the skills required by the labour market and that the trend has resulted in mass graduate unemployment. Statistics show that first school leavers make up 14.7 per cent of unemployed youths, secondary school leavers, 53.6 per cent, and university graduates, 12.4 per cent, these figures show that Nigeria has the highest youth unemployment rate in Africa (FME, 2016). Young people need to know and be able to do things that employers of labour want. Hence, young people should be given skills training in addition to regular schoolwork, to help them meet the manpower needs of businesses and government agencies.

Daniel and Biola (2019) examined the influence of skill acquisition in addressing unemployment in Rivers State. All graduates of the Rivers State Ministry of Women's Affairs are included in the study's population. A stratified random selection technique was used to choose a sample of 50 ministry skill acquisition graduates. More than half of the respondents had a positive view of skill acquisition, and it was advised that the government conduct effective sensitization programmes in order to re-orient young people's attitudes toward these programs.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since the pre-colonial era, women in Jos Plateau have been excluded from regional socio-economic activities. This is due to the Jos Plateau's inability to attain desired developmental goals due to a lack of education, financial empowerment, and cultural standards. Women traditionally have been seen as caretakers and contributors. If everyone is included, society can maintain a healthy equilibrium. This is a worldwide phenomenon, and it has been observed in seven nations with prominent feminist leadership: Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Taiwan, and New Zealand. These female heads of state have received praise for the way they handled the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, in Jos and the rest of Nigeria, no woman is allowed to serve as governor.

Women are naturally productive and a formidable force for social and economic development. They are a store of incredibly human resources required for every society's development. Their contributions and value-adding mechanism cannot be underestimated in households and national socio-economic achievements. The present role of women in national development is astonishing in light of their impact on security, peace, and the direction of socio-economic development of. To identify and harness these incredible human resources to ensure best performance in socio-economic development, attention must be given to holistic skill acquisition programmes that are designed to improve socio-economic development of women along the following lines:

- 1) A financial policy for women to acquire loans with no interest rate but redeemable within a year. This will boost the skills acquired by women and enable them to add socioeconomic value to Jos Plateau State.
- 2) Establishment of agribusiness women's cooperatives this will encourage socio-economic network and development activities for women in Jos Plateau state.
- 3) Basic quality education for women in Jos Plateau State, especially those in the rural areas, to gain equal training and employment opportunities with their male counterparts. This will have a multiplier effect on the education of young women in Jos, Plateau State.
- 4) Plateau state need to abolish the responsibility of institutional, artificial, and cultural norms and barriers hinged on cultural and religious considerations that have incapacitated the ability of women to freely participate in local and national affairs, particularly at the social, economic, and political levels.

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