



Women Education and Socio-Economic Empowerment in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated Women Education and Socio Economic Empowerment in Rivers State. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. 1300 women and 60 opinion leaders were selected through stratified random sampling technique. For the generation of data, two sets of questionnaire titled “Women Education and Socio-Economic Empowerment Questionnaire (WESEEQ) were developed based on four point likert rating scale. The instrument developed was tested for face and content validity through two experts in measurement and evaluation, to make the necessary corrections; their suggestions were included to improve the quality of the instrument. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using test re-test method and the reliability indexes were established at 0.76 and 0.82 index using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient. The data collected were computed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings made were that with education, women can acquire skills that would help them enhance their socio-economic status and that cultural believes against women are no longer serious barriers to women education and the recommendation was that federal and state government should enact law that will punish those that discriminate and exclude the girl from going to school.

Keywords: Women, Education, Socio-Economic, Empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

In every society, from developing to advanced, education is the key to unlock the potentials of all individuals, men and women, boys and girls. No individual can claim to have fully realized his or her full potential without education. This is why Ijah (2008) remarked that education impacts in the individual the ability and capability to survive, live and work, improve the quality of life, participate fully in development and make informed decision. It helps people to lift themselves

out of the shackles of poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and disease. Education is the only instrument with which men and women can tackle the problem of economic backwardness, acquire the ability to recognize and create new opportunities for themselves.

In acknowledging the importance of education to socioeconomic development, the Nigeria government (FME, 2001, p. 13), in one of the objectives of the UBE programme declared that “the provision of education at the primary and junior secondary shall be free to every child of school age”. Also, education is the community’s means of nurturing personal growth”. This means that both men and women from any community, state or country need education not only to live a successful life, but to also contribute to the development of their various communities.

Supportively, Okojie (2002) noted that in all countries, education is now recognized as a major vehicle for promoting and improving the status of women. It has been realized that sustainable human development is not possible if half of the human race remain ignorant and marginalized. It is contained in the Nairobi forward looking strategies 1985, cited in Okojie (2002), education is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women. It is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfill their roles as full members of the society”. Education the world over remains the most important instrument to arm the men and women in every society so that they can realize their full potentials and to contribute to the development of their various communities. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in their programme of action cited in Okojie (2002) remarked that education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Education is seen by many as the cornerstone of women’s empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities to challenge their traditional roles and to change their lives (Woke, 2004; Oleribe, 2007; Alamu & Olowosegun, 2011). This was also reiterated in the Human Development Report (UNDP, 1997) which stressed that an important strategy for empowering women is to promote their access to education.

In spite of the importance of education to men and women, in Nigeria in general and Rivers State in particular, women lag behind men in education. This is because in most communities, women are still restricted by traditional beliefs and roles, that most parents do not pay much attention to their education. Many parents still perceive the girl child as a member of another family and providing education to her obviously amounts to a waste of their resources.

This is happening despite the fact that Comenius (1592-1670) cited in Akinpelu (1984, p. 46) warned that “let none therefore be excluded unless God has denied him/her sense and intelligence”. He further notes that:

Our first wish is that all men should be educated fully to full humanity, not any one individual, nor a few, nor even many, but all men together and singly, young and old, rich and poor, of high or low birth men and women, ... all whose fate it is to be born human beings, so that at last the whole human race may become educated, men of all ages, all conditions, both sexes and all nations (p. 46).

Due to the low literacy level facing the women folk, they are mostly found on the low economic cadre. They are mainly relegated to the background when it comes to economic participation in their various communities in most case, they are found doing the odd jobs like clearing the farm, cultivating cassava, maize and others while their husbands work in oil companies and

government establishments. In some communities in Rivers State women still face extreme poverty, mass literacy, large scale ignorance, due to their educational backwardness. Low educational opportunities which the female child enjoys are as a result of certain constraints and these include customs and beliefs which confine them to the home environment. In the same vein, Anyanwu (1992) argued that women are faced with great burden to the point that, they hardly have time at all for their things outside their home.

To address this educational backwardness and the discriminations against women, various educational programmes have been initiated and launched by the government at the federal and state levels. These programmes have been initiated to enhance women socio-economic empowerment. Some of the programmes include the Adolescent Project, the Skill Acquisition Programme (SAP) initiated by the wife of the former governor of Rivers State, Mrs. Mary Odili, and the NDDC Skill Acquisition Programme. Other programmes initiated by the government to enable women to realize their full potential include the Current Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE), the free school uniform and free books programme of the last administration in Rivers State. At the face of these developments, this study surveyed the influence of these programmes to the empowerment of women in Rivers State.

Statement of Objectives

The main aim of this investigation is to determine the impact of education on the socio-economic empowerment of women in Rivers State. In more specific terms, this seminar addressed the following objectives:

- To examine the relationship between women education and socio-economic status.
- To determine the role of culture in the education of women.
- To find out whether women lack the necessary skills to enhance their economic wellbeing.

Research Questions

To bring about the successful conduct of this investigation, these research questions were addressed:

- What is the relationship between women education and their socio-economic status in Rivers State?
- What are the roles of culture in the education of female children?
- Do women lack the necessary skills to enhance their economic wellbeing?

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between education and socio-economic empowerment of women in Rivers State.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between cultural beliefs and the education of women.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Women Education

Women the world over are regarded as neglected in terms of providing them with educational opportunities when compared with their male counterparts (Chukwuma, 1999). This is despite the fact that education is rightly pointed out as the key that unlocks the door. Women especially those in Rivers State seem to lag behind because of their educational backwardness, although, this situation seems to be changing for the better. This pointed out, the importance of education to women have been variously explained by authorities in education and women empowerment agencies. Education according Ijah (2008, p. 8):

Is the key for unlocking the potentials of all individuals, communities and societies, education impacts in the individual the ability and capacity to survive, live and work, improve the quality of life, participate fully in development and make informed decisions. Education enables people to take good care of themselves, their families and control their future. Most importantly, it helps people to lift themselves out of the shackles of poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and diseases).

Education is the main instrument with which women can be empowered with the skills to be more productive in life. In the rural communities in Rivers State, women mainly perform all the degrading jobs such as farming, taking care of their households, washing, cleaning, making local mats and baskets. In all these activities; they only earn- little for basic subsistence. The sight of women working in their farms far away from their homes with their little babies tied to their backs and exposed to the scorching heat and rain is a common sight. They go through these debilitating conditions while their husbands are in the township enjoying themselves. With education, this would have been reduced to a minimal level. As a result, Hill and Cain (1993, p. 21), explained the immense power of education to up lift women from their present state of servitude, they maintain that:

The evidence is over whelming that education improves health and productivity and that the poorest people gain the most. When schools, open their doors wider to girls and men, the benefits multiply. Indeed, failing to invest adequately in educating women can reduce the potential benefit of educating men. This failure exacts a high cost in lost opportunities, to raise productivity, to increase income and to improve the quality of life.

Due to the importance of education to poverty alleviation, in the last three decades, the United Nations has been at the forefront of efforts to promote the status of women. Several conferences and seminars within and between countries have focused on gender and education (Okojie, 2002). According to the Nairobi forward looking strategies (1985), education is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women, it is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfill their roles as full promotion and improvement of the status of women, it is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfill their roles as full members of the society. Also, as contained in the report of the UNDP (1997) international

conference on population and development programme of action, education, together with reproductive health, is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Furthermore, recent research works have shown that investment in education for girls is the single most effective way to reduce poverty (Okojie, 2002). Even a few years of education empowers women to have smaller families and to enjoy a higher standard of living. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school creating a virtuous cycle of education and poverty reduction (Hill & King, 1995).

Empowerment

Empowerment is a derivative of the word power, as a process of women's struggles to improve their status. Karl (1995) further noted that empowerment is a strategy that seeks to transform the structures of sub-ordination through changes in legislature, property right and all those other institutions that reinforce and perpetuate total male dominance.

Women empowerment has been subjected to multiple definitions, Azikiwi, cited in Tanimu (2009, p. 65) women empowerment means "raising the awareness and consciousness of women towards act and laws that are detrimental to their progress and survival, it means giving women the authority and legal power to participate without any hindrance. Karl in Lamidia (2006) affirmed this when he noted that, it is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in decision making process, control and transformation actions, so as to enable them perform better towards improving themselves, their families and the society as a whole.

Women Empowerment

Women mainly those in the rural communities like the area of study covered by this work which is a rural setting needs empowerment through education more than others in the urban centers. Theirs is a matter of urgency; this is because the economic hardship in the country presently affects women in the rural areas more than those in the townships. Women in the urban centers can start various forms of businesses which do not need special skills and instantly, they will receive patronage from the teaming population in the urban areas (Equator, 2003). In fact, the situation here can rightly be described as being grievous, it can make any man, even those with dark goggles to shed noticeable tears. Women in these communities need empowerment in the form of training to acquire skills and abilities with which they can regain their self-respect.

At this point, what is empowerment? The term empowerment has been variously defined by authorities in the present on-going revolution on women education and mobilization. Women empowerment as defined in the United Nation (UN) declaration of the international year of perceived marginalization and discrimination against women worldwide as part of the millennium development goals United Nation (MDO 2001, p. 36) in their declaration maintains that:

Empowerment is a vital factor in the developmental programme. It is a process of giving people the where withal to actively and effectively participate in matters affecting their wellbeing. This includes skills, tools, resources and legal backing to perform and bring out their best.

Empowerment was more emphatic and precise when defining empowerment as the process of acquiring, providing, bestowing, the resources and the means or enabling the access to a control over such means and resources. Empowerment enables a person to gain insight and have an awareness of what is undesirable and unfavorable about his/her current situation. In Rivers State as already pointed out, women more than men in spite of the fact that the current deputy governor is a woman, women in the socio-economic ladder occupy the lowest position in the state. Many of them do not contribute anything in the home because they do not control any economic power. It is only through empowerment, through education that they can assert themselves. This is why Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler and Wieringa (1995) contended when they point out that empowerment entails affording people, especially women strategic opportunity to access and control their bodies and resources towards environmental and sustainable development.

In trying to rationalize the necessity for women empowerment in Rivers State in particular and Nigeria in general, UNICEF (2005:26) noted that, "70% of the Nigerian Population live below the poverty line, girls are usually the disadvantaged. They are often sent to the urban centers to work as house maids, sell wears in the market or on the streets, to generate income for families".

UNICEF (2005) further said that in some cases, girls at early age, start engaging in prostitution in the effort to survive economically. Brown (2003, p. 49) in his attempt to explain the reasons for women empowerment quotes:

Women are the poorest of the poor, disproportionately, women lack access to land, water, education and other social services. Often, women are absent from decision making not only at the national, regional or local levels but also within their own families. Many women are deprived of their right to make choices in their own lives and influence the decisions made around them.

Many women need education to help develop in them the skills and abilities with which they can be self-reliant, to take care of themselves and to contribute to the up keep of their families. In Rivers State, women who are educated attract a lot of respect not only from their husbands but from their communities while unpowered ones educationally face discrimination. Education facilitates the development of awareness and economic control of their environment. Educational empowerment for women involved mobilization, raising consciousness, accessibility to resources (land credit, education and training) and good facilities for empowering oppressed people, especially woman and poor souls.

Women and Socio-Economic Empowerment

In the rural areas in Nigeria, women have been empowered through many empowerment programmes launched by the government. Many have been empowered by their various families through education or material assistance to enable them to start one form of business or the other. This is why Offor (2000) in explicating the socio-economic roles of women in their various communities stated that educated women in the rural communities are empowered to have good information. Network on family issues health-care, equality and opportunity network, skill

acquisition, political choice and democracy. Above all they serve as agents of change leading the way out of superstition, discrimination, prejudice and beliefs.

Since the launching of empowerment programmes based on the philosophy shared the economic commission for Africa. The commission as cited by Njoki (2008, p. 36) notes:

Nations cannot be built without the popular support and full participation of the people, nor can the economic crises be resolved. Without the: full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of vast majority of the people.

As a result, many empowerment programmes have been launched in Nigeria as contained in the works of (Mivanyi, 1996). Various community development strategies have been adopted by: succeeding governments. Chadwick adopted mass education as development strategy in the Eastern Region of Nigeria in 1946. The Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) and Better Life for Rural Dwellers came into place during Babangida's Administration. The Family Support Programme was the focus of the Abachas regime. On the other hand, the establishment of the People's Bank, Community Bank and the micro-credit scheme were equally emphasized during the just concluded Obasanjo's administration. Another important programme was the skill acquisition programme initiated by the wife of the former governor of the state, justice (Mrs.) Mary Odili.

Although, the impact of these programmes were very insignificant to women when compared with the resources expended in the implementation of the programmes. Experience showed that none of these programmes made significant impact on the development of the nation, inspite of the enormous financial and material resources injected into them.

The role of women in the socio-economic development of their various communities cannot be over emphasized. Nwalinwu Julius Nyerere, in United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. UNECA (1989, p. 4), unequivocally stated:

National economic development is dependent upon the women of Africa and cannot easily take place without them. A person does not walk very far or very fast on one leg, how can we expect half of the people to be able to develop a nation? Yet the reality is that women are usually left aside when development needs are discussed, and also when the methods of implementation are being decided upon...

Women play the second fiddle, that is, their efforts have not been fully acknowledged by the society. They control the greater part of our agricultural economy, in trade mostly in the rural communities, they are very prominent. To this end, UNECA (1989) revealed that in sub-Saharan Africa, women constitute 60 to 80 percent provider of food for household consumption and a substantial population of labour resources for agriculture.

Of course, women in the rural communities especially, in Rivers State play important a role in the socio-economic development of their various communities. In the agricultural sector,

they produce larger percentage of the food consumed in many families they see to the health care needs of their children and many homes, they carter for the education of their children.

Approaches to Women Empowerment

Empowerment entails affording people, especially women strategic opportunity to access and control their bodies and resources towards environmental and sustainable developments not as an end in itself-on women's own terms. Some approaches have been identified as been effective for women empowerment. Usen (2009) identified exogenous and endogenous empowerment approaches. According to Usen (2009), exogenous empowerment emphasizes all interest holders in social phenomenon to participate and influence decision making process as it affects their lives consciously and unconsciously. This supports the idea of external individuals and groups influencing the empowerment of disempowered people. On the contrary, endogenous empowerment expressed capability-building activity among disempowered beings with a view to preparing them for full- fledged participation in decision making. These external individuals in using these approaches, it presupposes that external individuals and groups stand to facilitate disempowered people by fortifying them with the necessary mechanics required for empowerment tussles.

Karl (1995) identified four stages through which empowerment can be effectively enforced; awareness stage, capacity building and development stage, participation and greater control in decision making stage and action for change stage. Garba (1997) adds capacity and skill assessment stage in between Karl's stage 1 and 2 and evaluation stage as the last stage. This leads to the formation of six stage hierarchical empowerment process as opposed to Karl's four stages of empowerment. In Rivers state in general and Obio/Akpor, Gokana and Okrika in particular, the above mentioned approaches were not followed, in the implementation of better life for rural dwellers, family support programme, the micro-credit scheme and the skill acquisition programme, there was no proper awareness campaign, no capacity building of the skills of the rural women to enable them participate fully in the programme, neither were they involved in the decision making processes of the empowerment programmes, hence the failure of the empowerment programmes to properly impact on the rural women.

Some Empowerment Programmes Initiated to Empower Women

Some of these programmes include:

Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW)

The main aim of this programme is to mobilize and motivate women to take positive steps towards solving their problems through self-help efforts and by seeking the support of designated government agencies. The crux of the objectives is to generally elevate the life style of the rural dwellers, who have been deprived of modern comforts and amenities of life so long (Federal Ministry of Information, 1987). The programme which was the brain child of Mrs. Maryan Babangida was launched on the 14th September, 1987 by the first lady (Eboh, 1996). Based on the national objective of the programme, the Rivers State chapter of the better life programme articulated the objectives of the programme as follows:

- To improve the economic status of rural women by establishing collage and small-scale industries to improve their productivity and income generating abilities.
- To encourage the rural women for farm co-operatives for large scale farming, fishing and other cottage industries, and for better utilization of credit facilities.
- To establish multipurpose women centers in each local government area where functional and vocational education classes can take place such centers will also have facilities for the exhibition and sale of arts and crafts produced by women.
- To enlighten the rural women on income generation strategies, improved farming methods, investment opportunities, improved health care and family planning.
- To train Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA'S) in conjunction with the (State Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. (State Ministry of Information, 1999).

Family Support Programme (FSP)

The family support programme was initiated by Mrs. Mariam Abacha to help the empowerment of women. The programme was launched in 1994 with the following objectives:

- To improve the economic life of the rural dwellers.
- To provide good health care system
- Encouragement of the rural people to become more involved in politics.
- To build more accessible roads, this will in arguably reduce their transport problems and facilitate the transportation of theft agricultural produce and invariably, improve theft economic power.
- To build more schools in the rural areas and to encourage the rural dwellers to send their wards to school.
- To provide electricity to most of the village in the country.
- To eradicate some uncivilized treatment received by women especially those in the rural areas.
- To through their enlightenment programme reduce the practice of premature marriage by the girls.
- To educate the rural dwellers on their political rights and responsibilities.
- To mount an aggressive education programme to educate the rural populace (Federal Ministry of Information, 1994).

Skills Acquisition Programme: The Adolescent Project (Tap) Initiations

Skills as defined by the Industrial Training Fund of Nigeria (ITF) and Diigbo, 1989), as a combination of knowledge and practical ability. Skills acquisition can therefore be simple described as the act of acquiring practical ability or skills for personal benefit and the benefit of others as well. In most states, skills acquisition programmes were launched under different names. In Rivers State, the wife of the former governor Justice Mary Odili launched her pet project. The Adolescent Project which was launched in 2001. The main aim of the project was to arm the unskilled youths with skills with which they can be self-employed and more useful to themselves and the society.

The objectives of the project include the following:

- The project is aimed at educating youths on employment
- To train the secondary school leavers and women in one type of skill or the other with which they can work and live a meaningful life.
- To reduce crime rate and youth restiveness
- To reduce over dependencies on government and large firms for employment
- To arm the unemployed youths with the skills with which they can provide for state and national development
- To enhance the establishment of small scale enterprises
- To provide soft loan and allowance to the beneficiaries with which they can start theft business.
- To create a conducive and healthy climate for development. (Source: State Ministry of Information, 2001).

Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)

This programme is another brain child of Mrs. Marian Abacha. Family Economic Advancement Programme was formed in 1993; it was an off shoot of Family Support Programme (FSP). The programme was formed, founded and supervised by the office of the first lady then, Mariam Abacha, FEAP was an economic programme designed to empower rural women, assist them financially in the production of the following as its objectives:

- One of the objectives of FEAP is to improve the standard of living of women
- To improve standard of living through enhanced earnings, creating employment opportunities in local areas and self-actualization.
- To train women to acquire, develop and improve upon theft skills.
- To develop in women and the skill of entrepreneurship.
- Women are encouraged to form co-operatives and access loan for the development of their businesses.

As contained in Wikina (1999), the blue print of FEAP 1997 stated that real development starts with and is sustained by the support starts with and is sustained by the support and participation of people. Therefore, the bottom to top approach was adopted in the implementation of FEAP. The people were given the opportunity to choose and conceptualized development project suited to the peculiar circumstances of their localities (Wikina, 1999; Ministry of Information, 1994; Ekhaton, 2003).

Statement

In Rivers State, inspite of the various educational and economic programmes to empower women, they still face the problem of educational and economic backwardness. These problems of economic and educational backwardness are highlighted by Chukwuma (1999) when she

noted that “about 70%’ of the adult female population in Nigeria are illiterate compared to 46% adult male today. Chukwuma (1999) in his research on women and access to university education in Nigeria concluded that from 1981-89 men contributed an average of 76% enrolment while women contributed only 24% of the total enrolment of the universities. In a similar study, the National Commission for Colleges of Education carried out a study on students’ enrolment in Federal Colleges of Education (Technical) from 1995/1996 to 1998/1999 academic session. The study reveals that a total enrolment of thirty-nine thousand, six hundred and fifty-nine (39,650) males while the females were twenty-two thousand, six hundred and seven (22,607).

These problems of economic and educational backwardness brought with it the problem of high poverty rate, high mortality rate, the problem of over dependence and discrimination against women. This seminar sought to find out the impact of economic and educational programmes on women empowerment in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Patriarchal Theory

The patriarchal theory according to Appadorai (1975) in Maine (1991) postulates that unit of primitive society was the family which the descendants were traced through males and in which the eldest male parent was absolutely supreme. Appadorai (1975) further contended that a patriarchal society is characterized by male dominance in all spheres of life: social, economic and political. It is a hierarchical society in which paternal authority reproduces itself in a series of other inequalities.

The patriarchal division of labour in society, Okeke (2005), places the male gender as the chief producers of essential goods. The male children are trained from the early stage to acquire essential skills and knowledge for their essential functions in economic and political spheres in their adulthood.

Radical feminists blame the exploitation of women on men. They also see society as patriarchal-dominated and ruled by them. From their point of View, men are the ruling class; they went on to say that it is primarily men who have benefited from the subordination of women (Haralambos & Heald, 2002).

Drawing his ordinance from the bible, where Adam (the men) was created first and Eve (the women) not only created out of the man but created to help him and to assuage his desires. Appadorai (1975) opined that patriarchal society therefore confines the women to house-keeping and other domestic chores. Njoku (2008) agreed that girls are taught to expect less than boys. They are pushed to be less popular and marry young while the boys are encouraged to acquire education and career. Parents spent more money educating the male children in school relative to the girls whose education cost is termed as a waste as they will soon be married off. As a result, Okeke (2005) notes their education, if any, will only be relevant in the area of child caring, child rearing, nursing, house-keeping and the like.

The patriarchal theory maintained that women were denied education because of societal and parental segregation of the girl child. They were denied education because their parents perceived them as another man’s property. However, with the turn of events, it is only through education that women can combat the present high level of poverty confronting many of them in Rivers State.

Today, many women are competing with men in many areas that were perceived as the exclusive preserve of men. In politics, medicine, law, many women are competing with men. In Rivers state, a woman is a deputy governor and 23 women are deputy local government chairpersons.

METHODS

This study is a survey design. The study aimed at accessing the influence of education on women empowerment in Rivers state. It also sought to establish the relationship between cultural/tradition and women education and other problems that hinder women socio-economic empowerment.

Population

The target population for this study comprised all the women in Rivers State, both educated and non-educated ones, the married and unmarried. Also, covered include the community leaders from the various communities in the state. According to the National Population Census result 2006, the population of Rivers State was 5,185,400 and 48% of this were women.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study comprised 1300 women and 60 opinion leaders that were selected from 3 local government areas namely; Obia/Akpor, Gokana and Okrika local government Areas. To select this number; a stratified random sampling techniques was used, a card system was used, 23 cards were created, and only 3cards had the inscription “yes “or “No”. The inscriptions were carefully covered and the numbers of the twenty-three local government areas were written down on separated pieces of paper and carefully folded and put in a separate bag and a 7-year-old child was asked to pick and the three LGAs picked with the paper “yes” were identified and used. After this, two strata were created which comprised women and the opinion leader. From these two groups 1300 women and 60 opinion leaders were selected and used for this seminar investigation.

Table 1: Selected Samples of Women and the Opinion Leaders Selected from Obio/Akpor, Gokana and Okrika Local Government Areas

Names of the LGAS	Selected Women	Selected Opinion Leaders	Total
Obio/Akpor	433	20	1360
Gokana	434	20	
Okrika	433	20	
Total	1300	60	1360

Instrumentation

Two types of “Women Education and Socio-Economic Empowerment Questionnaire (WESEEQ) were designed for the investigation. The questionnaire had two sections, section ‘A’ concentrated on personal information such as sex, name of community, occupation, educational qualification, cultural inhibitions, relationship between education and socio-economic status and skills. The questionnaire was designed based on likert four-point scale of strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Open and close ended format were adopted in the design of the questionnaire.

Validity of the Instrument

The two questionnaire developed were tested for validity, the questionnaires were given to two experts in measurement and evaluation to vet, correct, criticize and recommend inclusions before the questionnaires were deployed for data collection.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire, was tested through the use of test-retest method. To apply this, 12 women and 10 opinion leaders were selected and administered the questionnaire and after 10 days, the same questionnaire were administered to the same sample and the two results analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the Reliability indices were established at 0.76 and 0.82.

Method of Administration and Collection of Data

The questionnaire where administered to the selected samples, the questionnaire administered were retrieved and analyzed using the most appropriate statistics.

Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered through the questionnaire were analyzed. The three research questions were answered through the use of mean and standard deviation while the two hypotheses were tested through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between women education and their socio-economic status in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Result of the Responses on Women Education and their Socio-Economic Status in Rivers State

S/N	Statements	Responses of Women				Responses of Opinion Leaders			
		Mean (\bar{x})	SD.	Crit. Mean	Decision	Mean (\bar{x})	SD.	Crit. Mean	Decision
5.	With education women are empowered with the skills to be more productive in life.	2.88	0.96	2.5	Accepted	3.1	0.85	2.5	Accepted
6a.	Women in Rivers state because of lack of education perform poor jobs like farming.	2.4	1.04	2.5	Rejected	2.72	1.05	2.5	Accepted
6b.	Watching and cleaning of their compounds.	1.99	1.0	2.5	Rejected	2.13	1.18	2.5	Rejected
6c.	Making local malts and baskets.	2.11	1.44	2.5	Rejected	2.12	1.11	2.5	Accepted
7.	Acquisition of education can help women to be self-reliant.	3.2	0.85	2.5	Accepted	3.5	0.85	2.5	Accepted
8.	Most of the women in your community are poor because they are not educated	2.39	1.14	2.5	Rejected	1.98	1.18	2.5	Rejected
9.	They work more hours and earn little.	2.82	0.97	2.5	Accepted	1.83	1.11	2.5	Rejected
10.	With education women can earn a lot of respect in your community.	2.85	0.94	2.5	Accepted	2.73	0.98	2.5	Accepted
11.	Due to lack of education most women in your community depend on their husbands for their survivals.	2.5	1.03	2.5	Accepted	2.85	0.93	2.5	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2020. N: 1300 N=60

Table 2 above presents the responses of women and opinion leaders on the relationship between education and women socio-economic empowerment amongst women. The result in table 2 above showed that women in their responses confirmed the following, with education women are empowered with the skills to be more productive in life, that the acquisition of education can help women to be self-reliant.

Women in their responses acknowledged that because of poor educational background that many of them work more hours and earn little, that with education women can earn a lot of respect in their community and that due to lack of education most women in their community depend on their husbands for their survival.

The opinion leaders in their responses in table 2 above confirmed that with education women are empowered with the skills to be more productive in life, Women in Rivers State because of lack of education perform poor jobs but the acquisition of education can help women to be self-reliant, with education women can earn a lot of respect in their community and that due to lack of education most women in the various communities depend on their husbands for their survival.

Research Question 2

What are the roles of culture and tradition in the education of female children?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Results of the Responses of Women and Opinion Leaders on the Roles of Culture on the Education of Female Children

S/N	Statements	Responses of Women				Responses of Opinion Leaders			
		Mean (\bar{x})	SD.	Crit. Mean	Decision	Mean (\bar{x})	SD.	Crit. Mean	Decision
12.	Due to traditional beliefs the society regards women as second class citizens	2.44	1.12	2.5	Rejected	2.22	1.24	2.5	Rejected
13.	Due to the traditional belief in my area that a women is only respected when she is married most women prefer to get married than going to school.	2.14	1.11	2.5	Rejected	2.28	1.28	2.5	Rejected
14.	Because girls are regarded in may community as another man's property their parents do not bother to send them to school.	1.69	1.04	2.5	Rejected	1.9	1.06	2.5	Rejected
15.	Women in your community are not allowed to acquired education because of their sex.	1.44	0.88	2.5	Rejected	1.62	1.0	2.5	Rejected
16.	Women are regarded as members of another family; they are denied education by their parents.	1.97	1.05	2.5	Rejected	1.83	1.13	2.5	Rejected
17.	Their parents prefer them working in their farms than sending them to school.	1.84	1.26	2.5	Rejected	1.63	1.05	2.5	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2018. N: 1300; N=60.

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation result of the responses of women and opinion leaders on the roles of culture in the education of female children. Out of the six items contained in the table 3, which include the following; that due to cultural beliefs that society regards women as second class citizens; that due to the fact that a woman is only respected when she is married, most women prefer to get married than going to school, that because girls are regarded as another man's property their parents do not bother to send them to school. Others include that women are not allowed to acquire education because of their sex, women are regarded as members of another family they are denied education and that parents prefer them working in their farms than sending them to school. In their responses both women and the opinion leaders rejected all the statements. That is, their responses in all the statements did not exceed the 2.5 mean cut-off-point.

Research Question 3

Do women lack the necessary skills to enhance their economic wellbeing?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Responses of Women and the Opinion Leaders on Whether Women Lack the Necessary Skills to enhance their Economic Wellbeing

S/N	Statements	Responses of Women				Responses of Opinion Leaders			
		Mean (\bar{x})	SD.	Crit. Mean	Decision	Mean (\bar{x})	SD.	Crit. Mean	Decision
18.	Most women in your community are not empowered through education to earn a decent living.	1.6	0.81	2.5	Rejected	3.02	0.95	2.5	Accepted
19i.	Most women in your community do not possess the skill to work in banks	2.67	0.99	2.5	Accepted	2.88	1.02	2.5	Accepted
ii.	They do not possess the skill to teach in the nursery, primary and secondary schools	2.89	0.95	2.5	Accepted	2.95	1.01	2.5	Accepted
iii.	They do not have the skills to work as doctors or nurses in the hospitals or clinics.	3.08	0.88	2.5	Accepted	3.03	0.36	2.5	Accepted
20	Many of the women in your community lack the skills to manage businesses	2.74	1.07	2.5	Accepted	2.2	0.90	2.5	Accepted
21.	Most of them are trained in the higher institutions to work in various fields.	1.89	1.14	2.5	Rejected	1.73	1.12	2.5	Rejected
22.	Most women work as teachers in the primary and secondary schools.	1.7	1.05	2.5	Rejected	1.82	1.12	2.5	Rejected
23.	Through education women in your community have acquired the necessary skills to ensure their economic wellbeing.	2.67	1.05	2.5	Accepted	2.73	1.09	2.5	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2018. N: 1300; N=60.

Table 4 above presents the responses of women and opinion leaders on whether women lack the necessary skills that can enhance their economic wellbeing. In the responses of the selected women for the study, they confirmed these statements: that most women in the community do not possess the skills to work in banks, most do not possess the skill to teach in the nursery. Primary and secondary schools and that they do not have the skills to work as doctors or nurses in the hospitals and clinics. They equally acknowledged these statements that many of the women in the community lack the skills to manage businesses and that, through education women in the community lack the skills to manage businesses and that through education women in the community have acquired the necessary skills to ensure their economic wellbeing.

While the opinion leaders in their responses affirmed that most women in their communities are not empowered through education to earn a decent living, that most women in the communities do not have the skill to work in banks and that most women do not possess the skills to work as doctors or nurses, in their communities. They also rejected 3 items.

Also, they agreed with these statements, that most women do not have the skills to work as doctors or nurses in the hospital or clinics and that through education women in their communities have acquired the necessary skills to ensure their economic wellbeing while 3 items were rejected.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between education and socio-economic empowerment of women in Rivers State.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the Relationship between Education and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Rivers state

Variables	N	$\sum x/y$	$\sum X^2/Y^2$	$\sum xy$	R. value	Z-Cal-value	Critical value	Sign. level	Degree of freedom
Women education	1360	3368	3506362	157248	0.95	112.1	2.000	0.05	1358
Socio-economic empowerment of women	1360	152	7102						

The outcome of the analysis in table 5 reveals strong relationship between women education and socio-economic empowerment among women. The result showed that the sum of x value is 3368 and the sum of y value is 152. Also, the sum of x2 value is 3506362 and the sum of y2 value is 47098 while the sum of the product of x and y is 157248. The correlation coefficient of the two variable produced a calculated r value of 0.95.

Then, based on 1358Df and 0.05 level of significance of two tailed test, 2.000 table value is obtained. Since the calculated z-value of 112.1 is higher than the critical value, the r-value of 0.96 is significant. This implies that there is a relationship between the two variables x and y, and their relationship is significant.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between cultural/traditional beliefs and the education of women.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the Relationship between cultural belief and Women Education in Rivers State

Variables	N	$\sum x/y$	$\sum X^2/Y^2$	$\sum xy$	R. value	Z-Cal-value	Critical value	Sign. level	Degree of freedom
Cultural beliefs	1360	2186	136244	6794	0.99	126.64	2.000	0.05	1358
Socio-economic empowerment of women	1360	117	3665	8					

The analysis of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showed a strong relationship between cultural beliefs and the denial of educational opportunities to women. The result

indicated the sum of x was 2186 and the sum of y was 117. Also, the sum x² was 1362644 and the sum of y² is 3665 while the sum of xy is 67948. The calculated R. value of 0.96 is obtained after the application of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Based on 1358 Df and 0.05 level of significance, 2.000 critical value was obtained and as the calculated z-value of 126 is higher than the z-critical value of 2.000, the r-value of 0.96 is significant.

FINDINGS

Based on the analysis these findings were made:

- The study revealed that with education women can acquire skills that would help enhance their socio-economic status in the society.
- The study revealed that cultural/traditional beliefs against women are no longer serious barriers to women education.
- The study discovered that women in Rivers state are still denied the right to their father's property, denied the right to own land and to own properties in most of the traditional communities.
- The study revealed strong relationship between education and women socio-economic empowerment.
- The study discovered strong relationship between cultural beliefs in most communities and poor education of women in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, these conclusions were made:

- That with education women can acquired the skills that would help them to earn a decent living.
- That due to advancement, cultural/traditional beliefs are no longer barriers to the denial of education to women.
- That inspite of improvement in the education of women, women are still denied the right to their father's properties and the right to acquire land or develop their own properties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions made by this investigation, this seminar recommended the following:

- That government at the federal and state levels should make the denial of education to women and the girl child an offense punishable by law.
- That government should enact laws through the national assembly that will ban the ancient practice of excluding women in the sharing of their father's properties.

- Women should be empowered through more purposeful skill acquisition programmes which would target women in the rural communities.
- Media awareness campaigns on the importance of education of women education should be intensified by the media houses.
- The federal law on child right act should be domesticated in all states of the federation, through the acts of state assemblies.

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