

Influence Of Vocational Skills Training Programmes on Widowhood Practices in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated vocational skill training programmes and widowhood practices in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. One null hypothesis was formulated and tested. The research design used was descriptive survey. The sample of the study comprised 133 widows selected from the study area using simple and accidental random sampling techniques. The instrument used for the study was a 20-item, modified four point Likert scale type questionnaire titled "Vocational Skills Training Questionnaire (USTPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was duly validated by experts and its reliability estimate was established at .78 using cronbach Alpha reliability method. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical technique was used to test the hypothesis at .05 Alpha level. The result shows that vocational skills training programmes have a positive significant influence on widowhood practices. Based on the result, recommendations were made, among others, that government should partner with non-governmental agencies and other stakeholders should encouraged women to develop more interest towards participating in various vocational skills training programmes in order to improve their welfare and sustain their livelihood.

Keyword: Vocational skills, Training, Programmes, Widowhood and Practices.

Introduction

Vocational skills refer to trades one can learn through some basic training. Such training helps both young and old to become knowledgeable and acquire relevant skills for self-employment in specific occupations or professions. It provides the experiences which enable individuals to develop competences needed to become self-employed and self-reliant enterprising entrepreneurs who can contribute to socio-economic development of their immediate communities and the country at large (Ogunleye, 2014). For a developing country like Nigeria, self-reliance does not only reduce dependence on government as the sole provider of the means of living and production; rather it also reduces the rate of unemployment and poverty among youths and adults (Asaju, 2012). Hence, vocational skills training could be regarded as the aspect of education that gives the recipients an opportunity to acquire practical skills as well as some basic knowledge which prepares the individual for gainful employment in a recognized occupation as semi-skilled worker, technician or sub--professional. Skills acquired through vocational training have the potential of empowering individuals, women inclusive, to also become employers of labour. Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development of any country. A country's economy becomes more productive, innovative and competitive through the existence of more skilled human potential. Studies have shown that women world over, are the most skilled, vibrant and dynamic segment as well as

potentially the most valuable human resource for enhancing sustainable community development and livelihood.

According to World Bank reports as cited in Mannir, Mbagwu, Osilike, Igwu and Okafor (2018) there is no society of the developing world where women are equal to men in social, economic, political and legal rights. The author further added that in many sub-Saharan African countries including Nigeria, women still do not have the rights to conduct family business, own land, manage property, or undertake income earning jobs outside their homes without the consent of their husbands. Intelligibly, such reports may no longer hold water because it is glaring that the majority of the human activities that sustains livelihood such as cooking, raising children and caring for the elderly as care givers and other jobs enables them earn incomes and fetch food on their family table, are done by women. Glym and Tracey (2012) noted that income earning by women certainly helps to terminate economic impoverishment that is depriving women the opportunity to participate effectively both in the family and community. Therefore, the need for vocational training skills for women cannot be overemphasized.

According to Talba (2015) vocational skills training programmes include agro-based acquisition, food catering and home management, dress making, hair dressing, knitting, pottery, tie and dye, soap and pomade making, skill acquisition programmes only. These enable women to acquire skills especially in the area of arts and craft to generate self -employment for income earning, improving their families' standard of living, thereby contributing meaningfully to increase in the nation's Gross Domestic Product.

It is this belief that underlies the torture and humiliation that women who lose their husbands are subjected to. For ages, widows have been subjected to obnoxious widowhood practice such as partial confinement, disinheritance of assets, wife inheritance, shaving of hair, forced grieving, wearing of dark clothing and accessories, eating in old and unwashed utensils and sitting on bare floor and so on. Nwoga (2000) asserted that in every African society, the "Saga of the widow" is not pleasure-giving. The author further stated that although, there are many cultural variations within widowhood practices, the stories when told, are not different. The African widow does not only suffer emotional and psychological trauma, she also goes through untold spiritual violence. Odor (2014) added that widowhood as practiced among many traditional African societies including Nigeria, places the widow in bondage. Akujobi (2009) also noted that widowhood is a reality for as long as people are born and die. However, in Nigeria, the experience of the widow could be such that women dread to be widows. That is, in some rural communities of Nigeria, widows go through unimaginable torture and trauma from the husband's family as a result of upholding tradition.

In Nkanu West communities specifically, the situation is not different from other communities as widows are normally confined to the house usually that of their husband's family, unless special permission is given for her to continue with the widowhood in her own house for a period of one year following the death of her husband. Widows are forced to surrender late husband's properties, shave their hair, to force them wake early morning of each day and late at night and sometimes are inherited as properties by their late husband's younger brothers. Also, the widows are normally not allowed to sleep on the bed for a period of time and so they

sleep on a mat or on the bare floor. These widows cannot engage in any economic activity for a considerable length of time usually one year, and they may have to wait for a year before going about their normal and legitimate businesses, especially if the widow is self-employed. Owasanoye, (2019) stated that by the economic hardship and societal rejection faced by widows, that they should never look down themselves because they are widows. The author further stated that skill acquisition programmes were conceptualized to build capacity of widows with advice to them not to take the training for granted saying different skills will be learned. The author noted that life skills and economic empowerment should be targeted on women, particularly the poor widows to learn skills and get the right motivation. Widowhood practices entail traditional agonizing conditions widows are subjected to as their husbands die. It is restricted to social subjugation accompanied by emotional deprivation, forceful seizure of property and cultural secularism.

Giving that this is an age long practice associated with very serious devastating effects on the widow, many people consider the continued existence of these obnoxious practices as a major social and economic problem, (Akpama and Osang, 2008). Though, women today are being increasingly recognized as important powerful and meaningful contributors towards the socio-economic development of a nation, countless women continue to be victims of torture, violence and large scale deprivation; amongst them the condition of widows is quite thought provoking.

Widowhood as a phase in the life of a woman is definitely a tragic event. As soon as a woman enters into the phase of widowhood, she encounters a lot of socio-economic, cultural, demographic health and individual changes. These changes go a long way to affect the widow economically, psychologically, emotionally, socially, etc. and make a widow more in need of skills acquisition training. Johnson (2015) asserted that the economic empowerment through skills acquisition of women could solve the problem of their marginalization from any impoverishment as sometimes widows shoulder a lot of family burdens like the upbringing of the children. Also, if the husband had some properties sometimes a widow fails to acquire the properties entitlement due to conflict with in-laws. The widow is neglected and less cared for and with inhuman treatment.

Commenting on this, Odor (2014) observed that, when women have weak property right, they are unable to secure resources that would allow them to improve their chances of living above poverty, even before the dissolution of a marriage or death of a spouse. Therefore, such widows should be empowered economically through skill acquisition programmes. Similarly, Nwoga, (2000) attributed disinheritance of widow's assets to "acquisitiveness" dehumanized and humiliated by these practices. The author further states that the widow becomes more amenable to keep silent over other forms of oppression which end up ultimately as economic disposition, Emewu (2003), noted that in certain parts of Imo State, the widows' ordeal demand a list of the man's property, holdings, investments, bank account etc. She is further required to take an oath as a proof that she has not concealed any relevant information on her husband's wealth.

Johnson (2015) stated that in the South East part of Nigeria, in the event of a husband death, and in the absence of an older son, his brother or male relations embarks on what is tantamount

to looting his property or assets quite in total disregard of the widow's joint or independent contribution, under customary law, which governs most marriages in Nigeria, a wife has absolutely no right to the husband's property or income. Thus widows are made resource less, lonely, helpless and powerless. These facts constantly threatens the very existence of the widow in the main stream of society. In this background, a widow feels extremely frustrated and unhappy. She feels her life is unfortunate. Therefore, the acquisition of skills for the economic empowerment of such widows has been great sources of relief (Adeyemo, 2014).

In African tradition, a woman is dependent on her husband for support, decision and protection. She has no independent identity, whether she works in the house or in the farm or in a factory because in African the man is the head of the family, owner of property and he is in-charge of the family exchequer. Under such circumstances, when a husband dies the wife who is unprepared for such a situation, faces several problems connected with finance as a result of disinheritance. She has to depend upon herself except for the help received from parents, kinsmen, and others which may not be either adequate or a constant source to depend upon. In this regard, Ngwu (2003), asserted that non-formal education provides ample opportunity for people to acquire new skills for economic empowerment. Since some widowhood practices such as widow's disinheritance stem from poverty, education through the informal sector could help to reduce poverty and attenuate the effects of widowhood practices.

In view of this, there have been clarion calls from all sectors of the society to put an end to this cruel, dehumanizing and barbaric practices. Therefore, government at all levels, non-governmental organizations, social workers and concerned individuals have been implementing various intervention programmes aimed at ameliorating the pathetic conditions associated with inhuman practices. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to investigate the extent to which vocational skills training programmes influence widowhood practices in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of vocational skills training programmes on widowhood practices in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. the influence of vocational skill training programmes on widowhood practices.

Research hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of vocational skill training programmes on widowhood practices.

Methodology

The research design used for this study was descriptive survey. This design was considered most appropriate for the study because it is concerned with the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, as it exists at the time of investigation

(Isangedighi, 2012). The target population of the study comprised 133 widows in the study area. The sample of the study consisted of 133 widows. Census sampling was used to select the widows. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled, Vocational Skills Training Programmes Questionnaire (VSTPQ) designed by the researchers. The instrument had 2 parts, A and B section. Part A contained respondents' demographic information such as sex, age, number of children, years of widowhood, educational status and occupation. While part B has 20 items in the form of modified four point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (d), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with scores 4,3,2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was duly validated by experts and its reliability estimate was established at .78 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. This reliability coefficient was considered high enough to justify the use of the instrument for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the subjects and collected by the researchers with the assistance of two trained research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

Presentation of Result

Ho₁: There is no significant influence of vocational skills training programmes on widowhood practices.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is vocational skills training programmes while dependent variables is widowhood practices. To test this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Result of the analysis in Table 1 revealed that calculated F-ratio 16.954 is greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.06 at .05 level of significance with and 130 degrees of freedom. This means that, there is a significant influence of vocational skills training programmes on widowhood practices in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected hence the alternate hypothesis was accepted. Since the result showed significant influence, a post hoc comparison test among group means was carried out to determine the pair-wise mean difference responsible for the significant influence. Fisher's least significant difference (FLSD) method was used in carrying out the test. Results of the analysis are presented in table 2.

Table 1: Summary of one-way ANOVA of the influence of vocational skills training programmes on widowhood practices.

Vocational Skill Training	N	Mean	SD
Low	6	19.33	7.74
Moderate	56	29.55	6.16
High	71	32.01	4.30
Total	133	30.41	5.93

Source of Variance	Sums of Square	Df	Ms	F-ratio
Between groups	959.917	2	479.958	16.954
Within groups	3680.159	130	28.309	
Total	4640.076	132		

$P < .05$; critical $F = 3.06$

Results of Fisher's test analysis in Table 2 shows significant pair-wise comparison group mean differences as follows: low versus moderate ($t = 4.47$; $p < .05$); low versus high ($t = 5.61$, $p < .05$); and moderate versus high ($t = 2.59$; $p < .05$). The results indicated that, those respondents who participate in vocational skills training programmes did better than their counterparts who were moderately and lowly participated in vocational skill training programmes.

Table 2: Summary of Fisher's LSD of the influence of vocational skills training programmes on widowhood practices.

Vocational Skills Training	Low (n=6)	Moderate (n=56)	High (n=71)
Low	19.33	10.22	12.68
Moderate	4.47	29.55	2.46
High	5.61	2.59	32.01

$p < .05$

- a. Group means are along the principal diagonal means
- b. Mean differences are above the principal diagonal
- c. t-value are below the principal diagonal

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study is in consonance with the finding of Odor (2014) who observed that, when women have weak property rights, they are unable to secure resources that would allow them to improve their chances of living above poverty, even before the dissolution of a marriage or death of a spouse. Therefore, such widows should be empowered economically through skill acquisition programmes. Also, the finding of this study is in line with the view of Ngwu (2003), who asserted that non-formal education provides ample opportunity for people to acquire new skills for economic empowerment. Since some widowhood practices such as widow's disinheritance stem from poverty, education through the informal sector could help to reduce poverty and attenuate the effects of widowhood practices.

Conclusion

From the result of this study, it was concluded that vocational skill training programmes have a positive influence on widowhood practices. Vocational skills training programmes aimed at empowering women for self-employment and also be independent. Vocational skill training programmes play a vital role in empowering the widows in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should partner with non-governmental agencies and other stakeholders to encourage women to develop more interest towards participating in various vocational skills training programmes in order to improve their welfare and sustain their livelihood.
2. Government and non-governmental organizations should embark on a massive skill acquisition programmes and empowerment of them become self – reliant as they create their own jobs.

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