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SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study analyzed the social exclusion of women in rural community development and administration in South-east, Nigeria. The study specifically ascertained women's economic status in the communities, examined the extent of women's exclusion from administrative and development activities in the communities. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting 360 women respondents for the study. Primary data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed that a pooled grand mean of $\bar{x}$ *= 2.97 affirmed that women had different economic status in the study area. The grand mean of* $\bar{x}$ *= 2.24 affirmed that the women had low level of inclusion in administrative and development activities. Result of multiple regression showed that the coefficients of ownership of properties (1%), control over own income (1%) and access to paid employment (1%), among others were statistically significant and negatively related to women's exclusion in community administration in the study area. The study concluded that women had low inclusion in community administrative and development activities in rural communities in South-east Nigeria. The study therefore recommended that women should be included in Community administration and that executive positions in rural community administration should not be male dominated.*

Keywords: Social exclusion, Women, Rural communities, Development, Administration.

INTRODUCTION

Development can be described as a process by which man maximizes his control and use of the natural resources in his environment for his satisfaction, (Raheem & Bako, 2014). Rural community development therefore constitutes development efforts to raise the level of awareness and living condition of rural dwellers. Onwubiko (2010) cited in Nwachukwu (2018) opined that community development is a process which involves the coming together of people residing in a given rural area to address their developmental challenges by pooling their resources and energies together. In every society, women are regarded as the live-wire because of the roles they play. Women and girls represent half of the world's population (United Nations 2020). They contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In Nigeria, the roles women play in the development of the home is diverse; ranging from child bearing to

care of child, the elderly and the sick. In spite of the Beijing declaration on affirmative action, women in Africa are not yet in the mainstream in the political and socio-economic space (Ohaegbuchi 2014). Men occupy relevant positions in the communities while a position that is not relevant would be given to a woman. In several parts of Nigeria, rural women are the mainstay of small scale farming, the labor force and the day to day household subsistence.

Women face many obstacles across nearly every aspects of socio-economic life in achieving sound and fulfilling lives in Nigeria. Women's economic opportunities also still woefully lag behind men's in almost every part of the country (Makama 2013, Enfield 2019) Women are often financially dependent on men or do not have control over economic resources (Nwachukwu and Kalu, 2019). They have more difficulties than men in gaining access to assets such as land, property, finance/credit facilities etc.

While widespread discrimination affects women's socio-economic development, women's inadequate access to leadership positions destroy the women the most by denying them the instrument to change their status quo. Despite the pivotal roles women play in rural community administration and development in Nigeria, they are excluded from decision-making processes and structures which make their voices not count in setting rural community development agenda ,(Agbalajobi 2010, World Bank 2012). Silver (2007) defined social exclusion as a multi-dimensional process which systematically blocks people from taking part fully in activities in the society in which they live. Social exclusion occurs when individuals or group of people are prevented from rights and opportunities that are available to others in different groups

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In most societies, women assume some key roles, such as: mother, producer, processors, home-manager, community organizer, socio-cultural and political activists, (Nyong and Archibong 2019). It would be only natural to see women equally represented in community assemblies, boardrooms, governments, the workforce, etc (Ogunjemilua & Familugba 2015). But that is not what is happening. Inequality in the public sphere often starts with discriminatory attitudes and practices as well as unequal power relations between women and men. This limits women's ability to find time and develop the skills required for participating in decision making forums outside the home, (DFID 2009). Onwuka, Nwadiubu and Isiwu (2019) observed that women make up to about 60 percent of the poorest people in Nigeria. Large number of Nigerian women wallows in abject poverty. Hoare and Gell (2014) highlighted that this poverty is experienced not just as material deprivation but also as marginalization, which means those living in poverty often have little or no opportunities to influence the political, economic and social processes and institutions which shape their lives and keep them trapped in a cycle of poverty. These poor women suffer social exclusion and are denied a place in administration and development activities in the communities in which they live, dominated as they are by men and male interest. They are hardly represented in community assemblies where decisions are taken. These constraints pose serious challenge to women's inclusion in community administration in the area. This study therefore sought to analyze social exclusion of women in rural community development and administration. The specific objectives were:

i. ascertain women's economic status in the communities;
ii. examine the extent of women's exclusion from administrative and development activities in the communities.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The South-East political Zone of Nigeria was the main focus of the study. The population comprised of all women in the rural communities in the area. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the samples for the three States namely Abia, Imo and Anambra; two political zones were randomly selected from each of the selected States, two Local Government Areas were randomly selected from each of the selected zones, giving a total of 12 L.G.As. In the fourth stage, two rural autonomous communities were randomly selected from each of the selected L.G.As, giving a total of 24 communities. In the fifth and final stage, 15 women were randomly selected from each of the selected rural communities. A total of 360 women respondents were used for the study.

Data were collected using structured questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages was used to analyze objective 1 and 2. For test of hypothesis, inferential statistics such as multiple regression was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Women's economic status in the communities

Table 1 showed the mean rating of the respondents based on their economic status in the communities in the study area. The result revealed a pooled grand mean of ($\overline{x}$ = 2.97) affirmed that the women had different economic status in the study area. The result further revealed that access to business network ($\overline{x}$ = 3.80), ownership of properties ($\overline{x}$ = 3.53), access to health care ($\overline{x}$ = 3.32), access to higher education ($\overline{x}$ = 3.29), ownership of land ($\overline{x}$ = 3.23), access to paid employment ($\overline{x}$ = 3.20), access to improved farm input ($\overline{x}$ = 3.01) among others, were the economic status of the respondents in the study area.

Table 1. Mean rating of the women's economic status in the communities in the study area.

Women's economic status in the communities	**Abia (n =120)**		**Anambra (n =120)**		**Imo (n =120)**		**S/E (n =360)**
	$\sum f(x)$	$\overline{x}$	$\sum f(x)$	$\overline{x}$	$\sum f(x)$	$\overline{x}$	**Pooled** $\overline{x}$
Ownership of land	330	2.75	441	3.68	392	3.27	**3.23**
Ownership of property	488	4.00	421	3.51	371	3.09	**3.53**
Access to micro-credit/finance	447	2.73	404	3.37	274	2.28	**2.73**
Control over personal income	274	2.28	396	3.30	293	2.44	**2.67**
Sign contract without husband's permission	130	1.08	292	2.43	224	1.87	**1.79**
Access to paid employment	299	2.49	373	3.11	480	4.00	**3.20**
Access to health care	384	3.20	409	3.41	409	3.36	**3.32**
Access to technology	314	2.62	437	2.63	370	3.08	**2.78**
Access to modern farm inputs	405	3.38	256	2.13	424	3.53	**3.01**
Access to training	387	3.23	314	2.62	317	2.64	**2.83**
Access to business network	455	3.79	483	4.00	432	3.60	**3.80**
Access to higher education	332	2.77	401	3.34	454	3.78	**3.29**
Access to labor	267	2.23	297	2.48	328	2.73	**2.48**
Grand mean		**2.82**		**3.08**		**3.05**	**2.97**
Benchmark mean		**2.50**		**2.50**		**2.50**	

Source, field survey, 2020

The result implied that the respondents engaged in different economic activities in order to sustain their livelihoods and status in their communities in the study area. Akpan (2015) noted that there is a positive correlation between the economic status of women and their participation in community development activities.

Women exclusion from administrative and development activities in the communities

The result on Table 2 showed the mean rating of the extent of women's inclusion in development and administrative activities in the communities in the study area. The result revealed a grand mean of ($\bar{x}$ =2.24) affirmed that the women had low level of inclusion in administrative and development activities in South-east, Nigeria. Furthermore, the respondents had high level of inclusion in community meetings ($\bar{x}$ = 3.4) and fund raising ($\bar{x}$ =2.8) in the study area. The result revealed that women in the study area had low inclusion in community budget analysis ($\bar{x}$ = 1.8) Budget allocation ($\bar{x}$ =1.8), community project development ($\bar{x}$ =2.2), Review of project development ($\bar{x}$ = 2.1) and strategic plan development ($\bar{x}$ = 1.5.) The result implied that the women did not participate in community administrative and development programs in the area. They were not included in the mainstream of community programs. They were included in fund raising because they were expected to make financial and material contributions. This result implied that the women had low inclusion in community administrative and development activities in the study area. The result corroborated with the assertions of Ohaegbuchi (2014) that in spite of the Beijing declaration on affirmative action, women in Africa are not yet in the mainstream in the political and socio-economic sectors.

Table 2 Mean rating of the extent of women's inclusion in development and administrative activities in the communities in the study area

Level of women inclusion in community development	Abia (n =120)		Anambra (n =120)		Imo (n =120)		S/E (n =360)
	$\sum f(x)$	$\bar{x}$	$\sum f(x)$	$\bar{x}$	$\sum f(x)$	$\bar{x}$	Pooled $\bar{x}$
Community budget analysis	242	2.0	207	1.7	188	1.6	1.8
Community meetings	331	2.8	421	3.5	456	3.8	3.4
Fund raising	345	2.9	282	2.4	381	3.2	2.8
Budget allocation	208	1.7	222	1.9	222	1.9	1.8
Community project development	298	2.5	290	2.4	218	1.8	2.2
Review of project development	261	2.2	226	1.9	251	2.1	2.1
Community strategic plan development	184	1.5	209	1.7	148	1.2	1.5
Grand mean		**2.23**		**2.21**		**2.22**	**2.24**
Benchmark mean		**2.50**		**2.50**		**2.50**	**2.50**

Source, field survey, 2020.

Regression analysis of the relationship between women's exclusion from community administration and their economic activities

Table 3 showed the multiple regression estimates of the relationship between women's exclusion from community administration and their economic activities in the study area. The linear equation was used for analysis. The R^2 (Coefficient of multiple determination values of 0.606 indicated that about 60.6% of the variations in the dependent variable were accounted for, while others were due to error. The F-values were statistically significant at 5% alpha level indicating the goodness of fit of the model used for the analysis. The coefficients of ownership

of properties (1%), access to micro-savings (1%), control over own income (1%) and access to paid employment (1%) were statistically significant and negatively related to women's exclusion in community administration in the study area. The result implied that an increase in women's ownership of properties, paid employment and control over personal income will lead to a decrease in their social exclusion from community administration and development activities in the study area. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between the women's exclusion from community administration and their economic status in the area was rejected at 5%level of probability and concluded otherwise.

Table 3 Multiple regression estimates of the relationship between women's exclusion from community administration and their economic status in the study area.

Parameter	Linear	+Exponential	Semi-Log	Double Log
Constant	.771	.358	1.89	3.051
	(.656)	(.289)	(2.101)**	(3.623)***
Ownership of land	.044	-.123	-.026	.161
	(.196)	(-.521)	(-.152)	(1.015)
Ownership of property	.063	.079	.002	-.005
	(4.839)***	(5.779)***	(.238)	(-.496)
Access to micro-credit	.033	.057	.085	.235
	(.218)	(.355)	(.727)	(2.164)**
Access to micro-savings	.045	.030	.016	.019
	(2.205)***	(1.395)	(1.002)	(1.289)
Control over own-income	.287	-.045	.001	-.010
	(3.853)***	(-.580)	(.022)	(-.193)
Control over own savings	-.028	-.045	.006	-.001
	(-2.36)***	(-3.586)***	(.622)	(-.109)
Access to paid employment	.764	1.110	.363	.261
	(4.19)***	(5.784)***	(2.594)**	(2.026)**
Access to social services	-.027	-.047	.063	.115
	(-.602)	(-.981)	(1.822)*	(3.555)***
Free to sign contract without husband's permission	.259	.504	.492	-.145
	(1.221)	(2.254)**	(3.013)***	(-.965)
F-ratio	**23.186*** **	**19.673*** **	**4.914*** **	**12.389*** **
R Square	**0.606**	**0.565**	**0.546**	**0.437**
Adjusted R	**0.580**	**0.536**	**0.496**	**0.408**

Field Survey, 2020. Key: * Significance at 10%, ** Significance at 5%, *** Significance at 1% ***, + = Lead Equation and the values in bracket are the t-value

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the women in the area engaged in different economic activities hence had different economic status such as access to higher education and health care, access to paid jobs and these made it possible for them to contribute to community development programs. It also concluded that women had low inclusion in development and administrative activities in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Nigerian customary law should be designed to ensure gender equality.
ii. Town Union / community government bye-laws should state clearly that community administration and executive positions in rural communities should not be male dominated.

iii. There should be gender mainstreaming in community development programs.

iv. Radical reorientation campaigns should be organized by Nigerian Orientation Agency (NOA) and other women advocacy organizations to change the perception about women and their roles in rural communities. NOA should make use of radio and television jingles and programs to discuss rights of women and public enlightenment campaign on gender equality should be sustained. The assumption of men that the women are under them and hence has little or nothing to contribute in decision making should be corrected.

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