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Women's involvement in Community Development Projects in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed the involvement of women in community development projects in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 160 respondents randomly. A well-structured interview schedule, key informant technique and Focus Group Discussion were used to collect data on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, development projects carried out with or without the involvement of the women and determine the perception of women towards their involvement in community development projects. Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean and Chi-Square. The results revealed that the majority (94.4%) of the women were involved in different community development projects and had favourable perceptions about women's involvement in community development projects ($\bar{x}=3.0$). Occupation ($X^2 =55.869$, $P=0.000$) and level of education ($r=0.183$, $P=0.021$) were significantly associated with women's involvement in community development projects. The women had a high level of involvement in development projects. As a result of the low involvement of women in some development projects, the Government and NGOs should motivate and encourage women to be more involved in community development projects. Hence, community project sustainability will be enhanced.

Keywords: Assessment, Women, Involvement Community, Development

Introduction

For the past years, women's involvement in community development has been the focus of intensive debates at most international forums. Among those forums that recognised the plight of the Third World women's involvement in development process are the 1995 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for advancement of women, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. These forums stated that each member was expected to promote women's economic independence, including the creation of employment, access to resources and credit, the eradication of the persistent and increasing burdens of poverty, malnutrition, poor health and illiteracy (Adejoh, et. al., 2019).

Rural urban migration has caused serious challenges to the third world countries as many rural dwellers migrated to urban areas. The major cause of the high migration to the urban areas is the neglect of rural areas, in spite of the fact that over 65 per cent of Nigerians are

rural dwellers. The rural areas are generally characterized by high level of illiteracy, abject poverty, unemployment and lack of other basic infrastructural facilities including housing, electricity and inadequate communication facilities. The standard of living in rural areas is generally low, this has partly informed the drift to urban areas where basic facilities are relatively more available and standards of living are higher (Akinyemi and Okunlola, 2019).

Notably, majority of African agricultural labour comes from women who are actively involved in rural development activities, ranging from agricultural to community programs. Although, majority of domestic work is done by women, including clearing, cooking, washing, raising children, tending crops and animals, and processing harvested crops. There have been cases where women have become the sole economic support of their households due to the death of their spouses or the migration of males to urban areas in search of white-collar jobs. The development of communities plays a crucial role in empowering people, alleviating poverty, generating income, and creating jobs. In other words, self-help projects and community development emphasize that communities ought to provide for their felt needs by helping themselves. The development of sustainable communities cannot be forced or ordered; instead, they will likely happen when all actors in a community such as; men, women and young people are equally and democratically involved in steering and implementing projects for community or village development. Although, in most rural communities, development activities are viewed as men's responsibility, and women are regarded as passive beneficiaries. There are many vital roles women play in their communities that are not only complementary to those played by their male counterparts, but some of them are even very important (Ilori, *et. al.*, 2022). However, development is not an isolated activity and it implies progress from a lower state to a preferred higher one. Development is a process by which people are awakened to opportunities within their reach. Nevertheless, women in rural areas can contribute to development of their communities in the same manner as those in urban areas, if they are initiated and guided in the development processes of their choice (Akinyemi, 2018).

As a result of the limited role women play in community development, a major problem has arisen in our society. These problems have caught the attention of different governments, writers and anyone interested in improving development. In Nigeria, hundreds of seminars, conferences, and workshops were organized to promote women's involvement in community development over the past three decades. Among community activities, there is a lack of women's participation in need identification, project planning and financing, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of community projects. Today, scholars and professionals often present papers that identify the purpose and propose solutions to the many problems that hinder women's advancement at all levels without actually investigating them. Women organizations have been affected in a variety of dimensions as a result of a lack of government interest in community development projects, particularly in the area of community development projects (Deekor and Ekwems, 2022). The logic beyond this attempt is the necessity of using all the potential human resources toward development goals. Women's involvement refers to women actively engaging as full members in mediation and dialogue processes as parties to the talks, mediators, negotiators, envoys or advisers (European Union (EU), 2012). It therefore becomes imperative that, to have any appreciable development in any community, these women must be the focus of any development project. Specifically, the specific objectives were to: (i) identify the development projects carried out with and without women's involvement; (ii) determine the level of women's involvement in rural development projects during project implementation; and (iii) determine the perceptions of women toward involvement in rural development projects.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Ekiti State of Nigeria, which lies between latitude 7° 15' and 8° 7' north of the equator and longitude 4° 47' and 5° 45' east of the Greenwich meridian in the South west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state is within the ecological belt known for abundant

forest resources thus making the State appropriate for agriculture. The population of the study included rural women within four local government areas in Ekiti-State, Nigeria. A Multistage sampling procedure was used in the selection of respondents for the study. Random sampling technique was used in selecting four local government areas out of the sixteen local government areas (LGAs) in Ekiti State. The LGAs are Ekiti East, Ekiti Southwest, Ikole and Ido Osi Local Government. The second stage involved random selection of four rural communities from each of the local government areas making a total of sixteen communities. The communities are Kehinde, Sunday, Giwa and Paul communities in Ekiti East Local Government Area; Fatula, Odo ugo, Gbodigbodi and Orisunmibare communities in Ikole Local Government Area; Ifisin, Aaye, Igbole and Ora communities in Ido Osi Local Government Area; and Osun, Alawaye, Ogotun and Ilupeju communities in Ekiti Southwest Local Government Area. The third stage involved random selection of ten women from each community making a total of 40 respondents per local government area. Therefore, a total of 160 respondents constituted the sample size for the study. Both primary data and secondary sources were used for this study. The primary data was obtained with the aid of a pre-tested and validated interview schedule. A focus group discussion was also carried out to obtain more information from the respondents. The Secondary sources were obtained from journals, textbooks, reports and other relevant published materials including the Internet.

The identification of respondents' socio-economic characteristics was done at nominal, ordinal and interval levels while a list of development projects carried out with and without women's involvement was presented to the respondents on dichotomous responses of yes (1) and no (0). The level of women's involvement in rural development projects during project implementation was done on a three-point Likert-type rating scale and the mean was tabulated and presented. Also, regarding the perceptions of women toward involvement in rural development projects, a list of perception statements was presented to the respondents to tick on a five-point Likert-type rating scale and the mean was tabulated and presented. Frequency distribution table, percentage, mean score and chi-square were used to achieve the research objectives.

Results and Discussion

Women's involvement in development projects

Figure 1 shows the involvement of women in development projects carried out in their community. The majority 94.4% of the women indicated that women were involved in development projects while 5.6% of the women were not involved in development projects. This implies that the majority of women are involved in development projects as there is no disparity between men and women in carrying out the projects. However, their involvement in the development projects could be attributed to the importance of the development projects in the community.

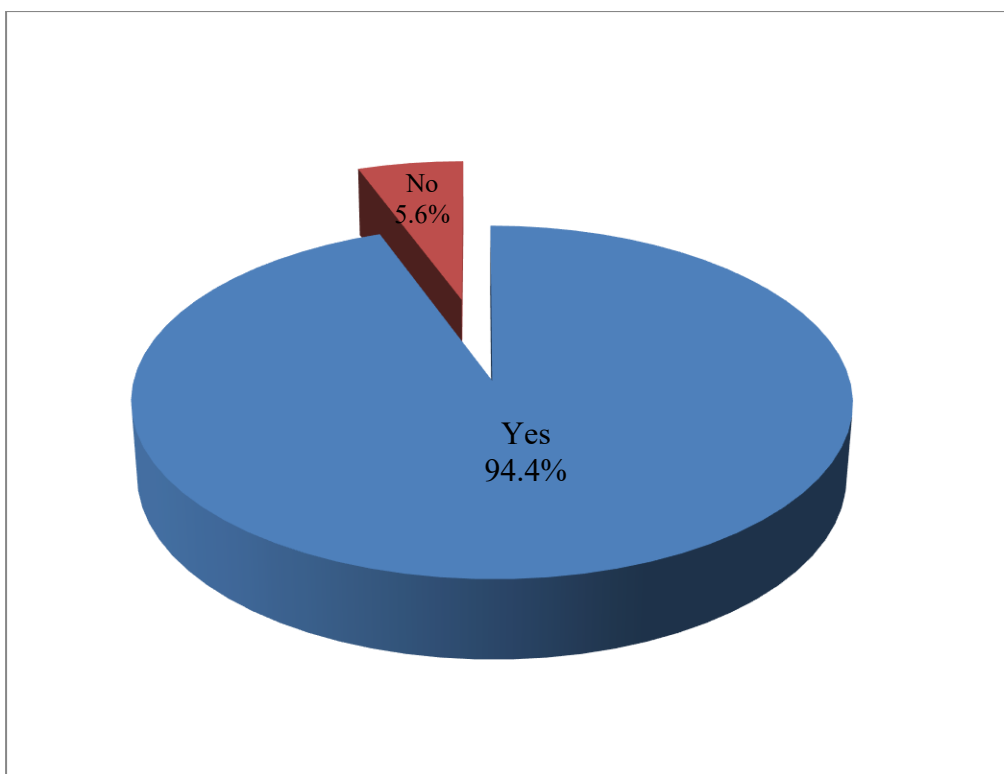


Figure 1: Women involvement in any of the development projects

Source: Field survey, 2022

Development projects carried out with and without women's involvement

As indicated in Table 1 the developmental projects carried out with and without the participation of women. About 63% of the women were involved in the building of schools, 61.9% in the drilling of boreholes, 51.3% in the renovation of schools and 49.5% got involved in the building of Health Centre. This implies that the building and renovation of schools, drilling of boreholes and building of health centres were projects carried out with women's involvement to; encourage their children's education, reduce problems of access to potable water, and waterborne diseases and have a proper solution to health-related issues. The reason for the above projects was attributed to the fact that they were the felt needs of the communities. During the focus group discussion (FGD) with the women, it was revealed that community women contributed counterpart funds and in some instances provided the required labour and materials utilized for these projects.

The projects carried out without women's involvement were in sequential order includes; about 2% of the respondents indicated that women were not involved in the building of motor parks, construction of police stations (2.5%), building of ICT centres (5.0%), building of women centre (6.9%), building of training/skill acquisition centres (8.1%), building of civic centre (10.0%), building/renovation of palace (11.9%), construction of water treatment plant (15.6%), street light installation project (16.3%), erosion control project (18.1%), transformer installation project (23.1%), building of community hall (25.0%). rural electrification (26.9%) and construction of roads/bridges (33.1%). The low level of women's involvement in the above-mentioned development projects was due to technicalities required for the construction/building of the projects as the machine was required to carry out the project work with the help of experts which is not within the range of the women. Hence, they attributed some of the projects to be government and men's responsibility.

Table 1: Development projects carried out with and without women's involvement

| Development Projects | Women Involvement |
|--|---------------------|
| | Percentage (n= 160) |
| Building of Health Centre | 49.4 |
| Construction of roads/Bridges | 33.1 |
| Building of schools | 62.5 |
| Construction of borehole | 61.9 |
| Building of ICT centre | 5.0 |
| Construction of Police Station | 2.5 |
| Building of market | 28.8 |
| Erosion control project | 18.1 |
| Rural electrification | 26.9 |
| Building of community Hall | 25.0 |
| Transformer installation Project | 23.1 |
| Street light installation project | 16.3 |
| Building of Women Centre | 6.9 |
| Building of Civic Centre | 10.0 |
| Construction of Water Treatment Plant | 15.6 |
| Renovation of schools | 51.3 |
| Building/Renovation of Palace | 11.9 |
| Building of Motor parks | 1.9 |
| Building of training/Skill acquisition centres | 8.1 |

Source: Field survey, 2022

Level of Women's Involvement in Rural Development Projects during Project Implementation

Table 2 shows the depth of respondents' participation in project implementation, and in building of market ($\bar{x} = 2.91$), building/renovation of palace ($\bar{x} = 2.58$) and building of women's centre ($\bar{x} = 2.55$). The reason for the above could be attributed to the fact that they were the priority of the women as well as the felt needs of the communities to the extent that women contributed counterpart funds, and provided the required labour and materials employed for the projects.

Table 2: Level of women's involvement in rural development projects during Project Implementation

| Development projects | Project Implementation | |
|--|------------------------|------|
| | Mean | Rank |
| Building of Health Centre | 1.78 | 9th |
| Construction of roads/Bridges | 1.62 | 11th |
| Building of schools | 2.05* | 7th |
| Construction of borehole | 1.95 | 8th |
| Building of ICT centre | 1.50 | 14th |
| Construction of Police Station | 1.25 | 16th |
| Building of market | 2.91* | 1st |
| Erosion control project | 1.21 | 17th |
| Rural electrification | 1.07 | 18th |
| Building of community Hall | 2.53* | 4th |
| Transformer installation Project | 1.05 | 19th |
| Street light installation project | 1.58 | 12th |
| Building of Women Centre | 2.55* | 3rd |
| Building of Civic Centre | 2.19* | 6th |
| Construction of Water Treatment Plant | 1.56 | 13th |
| Renovation of schools | 2.44* | 5th |
| Building/Renovation of Palace | 2.58* | 2nd |
| Building of motor parks | 1.67 | 10th |
| Building of training/skill acquisition centres | 1.46 | 15th |

Source: Field survey, 2022

Perception of women concerning involvement in rural development projects

Results in Table 3 showed the perception of women concerning involvement in rural development projects. The results revealed that respondents agreed with the following statements: participation could induce change in livelihood of the women ($\bar{x} = 4.49$) and project mobilization strategy encourages participation ($\bar{x} = 4.48$). This implies that respondents perceived involvement as a means of change in women's livelihood which could bring changes in women's daily living like projects with high importance such as the building of a market for income generation, construction of boreholes for potable water, and building of health centre for medical care among others.

Other statements which women agreed to include; I can do better without participating in any developmental projects ($\bar{x} = 4.09$), participation in rural development projects cannot add to my earnings/income ($\bar{x} = 3.86$) and participation in projects does not enhance project success ($\bar{x} = 3.01$). This was attributed to the stress involved when participating in any of the development projects and at the same time, the level of exposure of some women due to time spent on the farm while some women perceived their efforts to be less appreciated as a result of some men awarding themselves the prestige and success attached to the projects. Women revealed that project like borehole construction has nothing to do with income but for better accessibility of portable water since they live in the rural area. This is an indication that a positive perception of women in rural development projects could be mobilized to transform rural areas. Women perceived rural development projects as bringing economic and social development in the rural areas, bringing about the development of infrastructure, creating employment, integrating the rural poor and raising the standard of living in the community.

Table 3: Perception of women concerning participation in rural development projects

| Statement | Mean | Rank |
|---|-------|------|
| Participation in development projects is a waste of time and energy | 1.53 | 16th |
| Participation in projects does not enhance project success | 3.01* | 5th |
| Participation in development projects can disturb my relationship with my family due to time demand | 1.68 | 12th |
| Participation in rural development project cannot really add to my earnings/income | 3.86* | 4th |
| Conflicts can arise when participating in rural development projects | 2.16 | 7th |
| Participation in development projects can reduce my sales | 1.57 | 15th |
| Rural development participation is purely designed for young ones | 1.45 | 17th |
| Women participation in decision making on project is always pretentious | 1.79 | 11th |
| Women efforts are less appreciated | 1.96 | 9th |
| Participation attracts development partners | 2.92 | 6th |
| I can do better without participating in any developmental projects | 4.09* | 3rd |
| Participation in rural development projects is mainly designed for men | 1.31 | 18th |
| Projects participation is mainly for educated stakeholders | 1.61 | 13th |
| Participation could induce change in livelihood of the women | 4.49* | 1st |
| Political reasons influence my participation in development projects | 1.58 | 14th |
| Projects mobilization strategy encourages my participation | 4.48* | 2nd |
| Unemployment can be reduced when participating in rural development projects | 2.08 | 8th |
| Men always take most decision | 1.90 | 10th |

Source: Field survey, 2022

*Positive perception

Association between the respondents’ socio-economic characteristics and women's involvement in rural development projects

Chi-square results in Table 4 and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) result in Table 5 revealed that there was a significant association between socioeconomic characteristics of women such as Occupation ($X^2 = 55.869$, $P=0.000$) and women's involvement in community development projects. Also, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) result in Table 5 revealed that there was a significant relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of women such as Level of education ($r=0.183$, $P=0.021$) and women's involvement in community development projects. This implies that occupation and level of education influenced women's involvement in community development projects. The women's occupation gave them full control over their time and this caused them to be actively involved in development projects. Likewise, the level of education encourages respondents to think of better living as a result of their exposure. Hereafter, contribute counterpart funds to carry out the project. Ilori et al., (2022) revealed that education is one of the keys to the development of any community in such a way that women with one form of education or the other are expected to contribute their quota at all levels of participation in community development projects.

Table 4: Association between the respondent’s socio-economic characteristics and their participation in rural development projects

| | X^2 | <i>Df</i> |
|----------------|---------|-----------|
| Marital status | 7.330 | 3 |
| Religion | 0.702 | 2 |
| Occupation | 55.869* | 2 |

Source: Field survey, 2022 *df*=degree of freedom

* $P \leq 0.05$

Table 5: Relationship between the respondent’s socio-economic characteristics and their participation in rural development projects

| | r value | P value |
|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Age | 0.122 | 0.125 |
| Level of Education | 0.183 | 0.021 |
| Household size | 0.085 | 0.284 |
| Monthly income | 0.060 | 0.450 |

Source: Field survey, 2022

*Significant at 0.05 level

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed the involvement of women in community development projects in Ekiti State as part of the notable partner to developmental projects sustainability both in rural and urban communities. Women who were involved in community development projects were still young, matured and active as this caused them to participate successfully in development projects. Married respondents participated more in rural development projects than unmarried counterparts due to their level of responsibility. It affirmed that most of the respondents pass through basic and advanced education that is “Secondary and Tertiary education” hence they are expected to be experienced and have deep knowledge of communal efforts. Most of the women were farmer. It was also discovered that women participated well in development projects as there was no disparity between men and women in carrying out the projects; however, building of schools, drilling of borehole, renovation of schools, and building of Health centre were the projects with high women involvement due to the fact that the project were the felt needs of the communities. The women level of involvement was high during project implementation in project such as building of market, building/renovation of palace and

building of women centre. The women perceived that participation could induce change in livelihood of the women and projects mobilization strategy encourages their involvement in community development projects. The result revealed that there was significant association between women occupation and their involvement in community development projects. Women should be motivated, encouraged and sensitized more on the project ascribed to men and government so as to contribute counterpart fund to support the project. Women should be trained to engage more in development projects especially projects with low involvement. Government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), development partners and stakeholders should include women at all stages of participation to enhance projects sustainability.

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